the weekly
# Standard

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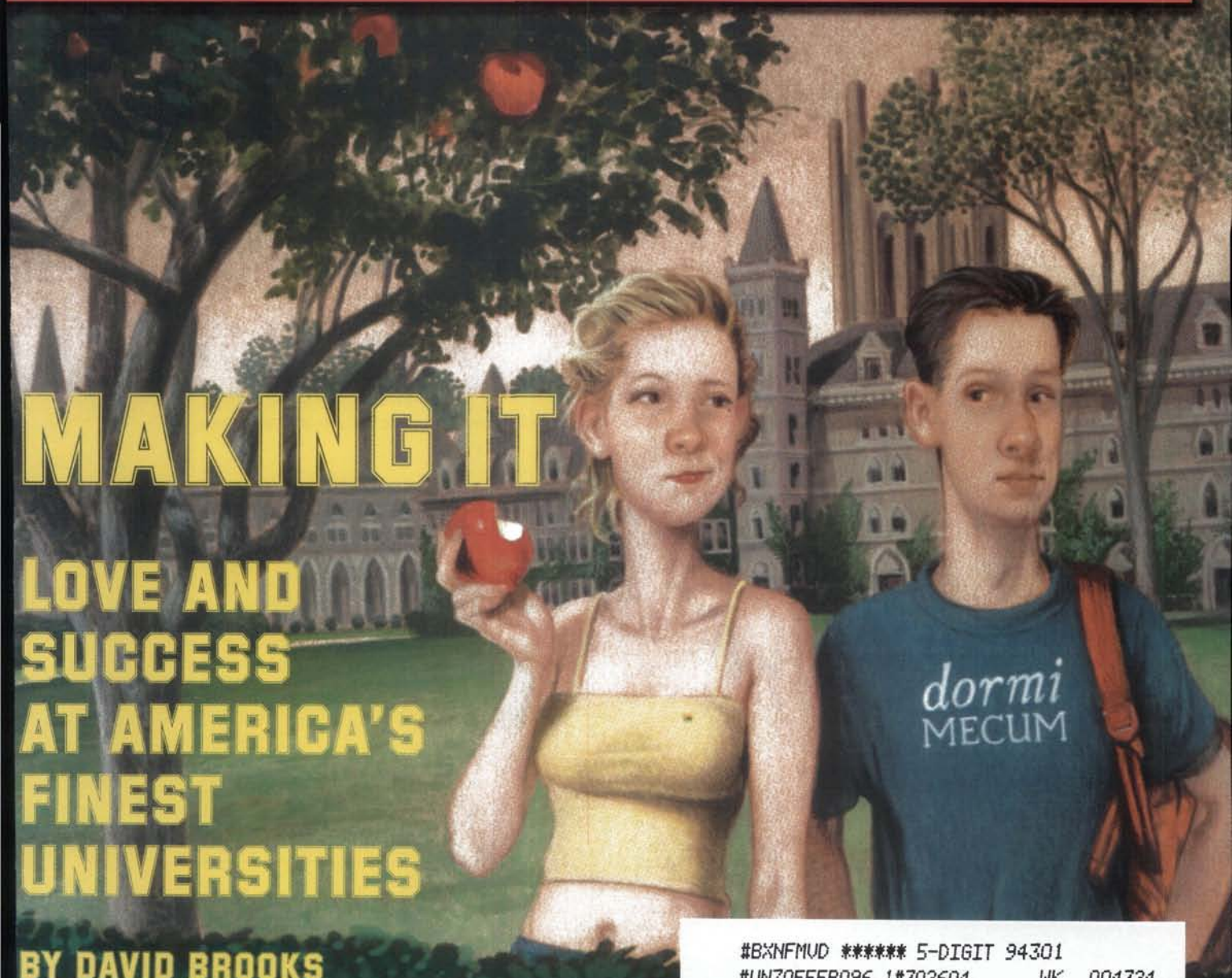
THE DREAM OF MECHANICAL LIFE
HUGH ORMSBY-LENNON




# MAKING IT

## LOVE AND SUCCESS AT AMERICA'S FINEST UNIVERSITIES

BY DAVID BROOKS

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**Irwin M. Stelzer—Larry Lindsey Was Right**
**Stephen F. Hayes—Trent Lott Was Wrong**
**Bill Tierney—Who Is Prince Nayef?**
**The Editors—A Clone by any Other Name . . .**

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# "Celebrities" Aren't What They Used To Be

Over the years, liberals of our acquaintance have sometimes snickered about conservatives' gaping celebrity deficit. Indeed, THE SCRAPBOOK would be the first to admit that when Republicans go sniffing after an endorsement from Hollywood, they have few names on their call sheet: There's Charlton Heston, Kennedy-conservative Arnold Schwarzenegger, maybe Shannen Doherty, who led the pledge at the 1992 GOP convention, and even we'd be embarrassed to mention the names lower on the list.

What irks us is the inference that one's ideas are bankrupt because some room-temperature-IQ'd celebrity isn't espousing them. Or at least it did, until now. This week, THE SCRAPBOOK had occasion to teleconference into an anti-Bush celebrity press conference (bearing the cumbersome title "Win Without War to Resist Bush Preemption of Peace Process"). Brought to us by Fenton Communications, the same PR people who flacked for the Sandinistas, the roster was less a Who's Who than a Who's That? "100 Celebrities to Speak Out," Fenton had promised. Clearly, though, the term "celebrity" was being used remarkably loosely.

Sure, some of the 100 or so names attached to the antiwar letter are recognizable, A-list signatories: Anjelica Huston, Matt Damon, Kim Basinger, and Martin Sheen (the last of whom shouldn't count, since he signs everything). But most of the others are now on the infomercial circuit—if they're lucky. Are those who oppose war with Iraq really supposed to be emboldened because Rene Auberjonois (Clayton from *Benson*) or Ken Howard (Coach Reeves from *The White Shadow*) says they should be?

Among actual attendees, the obscurity problem was even worse. Yes, Wendie Malick, star of *Just Shoot Me*, is close to A-listish, but she had to leave almost immediately since, as one organizer said, "she has to go to work." That didn't seem to be a problem for too many of the others. The cavalcade of "stars" included a former regular from the now-cancelled *Coach*, the wife of *The Practice*'s Dylan McDermott (he couldn't make it), and former *Hill Street Blues* star Barbara Bosson, who's been off the air so long that even an organizer had to ask about her credits.

Co-organized by Robert Greenwald, perhaps best known as director of the 1984 television movie *The Burning Bed*, and Mike Farrell, who knows all about the horrors of war from his stint as B.J. Hunnicut on *M*A*S*H*, the celebrity press conference was unusually self-effacing. "We are not experts in this field," Greenwald warned, perhaps superfluously.

Consider the statement of David Clennon (Miles Drentell on *thirtysomething*, a popular show fifteensomething years ago), which read, almost in its entirety: "We have achieved our objective; we do not need to go to war. The war is over, and we have won. Thank you." Or Ed Begley Jr., who is best remembered—on the rare occasions he is remembered—for playing Dr. Ehrlich on *St. Elsewhere*, explaining that we "need to win the war on terrorism," and that the best way to curtail Saddam would be to follow Begley's example of driving electric vehicles.

Any antiwar types hoping for an infusion of celebrity energy had to have been disappointed. "Looking at it closely and going over and over it," said Greenwald, "one comes back to the same feeling that there aren't any ideal solutions." Perhaps, in the interest of generating some, they could go a little deeper into the B-list celebrity bench. THE SCRAPBOOK suggests Sharon Claridge, who played the unseen dispatcher on *Adam-12*. She has an excellent speaking voice, and if she's still alive, she could probably use the work. ♦

## Strom Thurmond, the Man and the Myth

Trent Lott said a lot of unconvincing things last week, but this one, in his interview with Sean Hannity, takes the cake:

"When I think of Strom Thurmond, I'm talking about defense issues. If you look back at that time, which was 1948, defense was a big issue. We were coming out of the war, of course, but we also were dealing with communism."

What do you mean "we," white man? For Thurmond's Dixiecrats, the Cold War that mattered was the one they were fighting with their fellow Democrats, and while they agreed that there was a totalitarian threat, they thought its headquarters was in Washington.

THE SCRAPBOOK dusted off a copy of the "declaration of principles" from the States' Rights convention in Birmingham, and—get this—there's not a word in it about defense policy. Here, though, is its warning about totalitarianism:

The 1948 Democratic convention, the Dixiecrats complained, had "called for a civil-rights law that would eliminate segregation of every kind from all American life, prohibit all forms of discrimination in private



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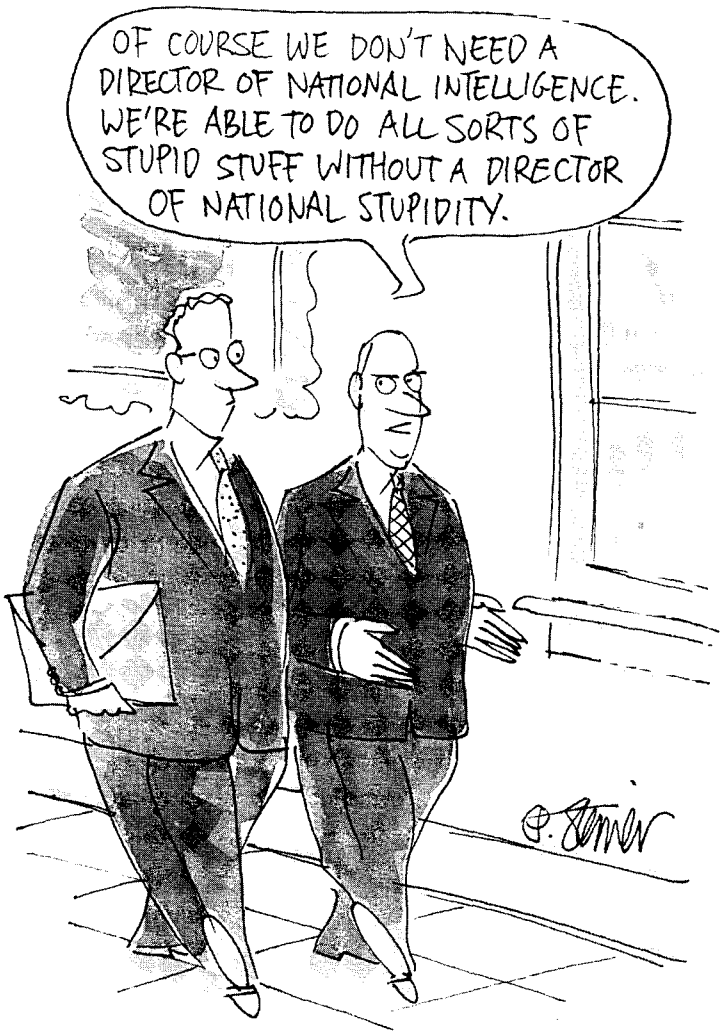


employment, in public and private instruction and administration and treatment of students; in the operation of public and private health facilities; in all transportation, and require equal access to all places of public accommodation for persons of all races, colors, creeds and national origin.

"This infamous and iniquitous program calls for the reorganization of the civil rights section of the Department of Justice with a substantial increase in a bureaucratic staff to be devoted exclusively to the enforcement of the civil rights program; the establishment within the FBI of a special unit of investigators and a police state in a totalitarian, centralized, bureaucratic government.

"This convention hypocritically denounced totalitarianism abroad but unblushingly proposed and approved it at home. This convention would strengthen the grip of a police state upon a liberty-loving people by the imposition of penalties upon local public officers who failed or refused to act in accordance with its ideas in suppressing mob violence."

To translate: The liberty to lynch was under attack, and the Dixiecrats were riding to the defense. So okay, maybe there was a "defense issue" in their platform, after all. ♦

## Shot Down

Michael Bellesiles is no longer the winner of the prestigious Bancroft prize. After insisting that accusations of fraud in his work were a garden-variety scholarly dispute, Columbia University has finally rescinded the award given to Bellesiles for his now discredited 2000 book, *Arming America: The Origins of a National Gun Culture*. What's more, Columbia is asking for the return of the $4,000 in prize money.

*Arming America*, for the uninitiated, argued that before the Civil War, Americans didn't really own many guns, and if they did, the guns were probably broken, and if the guns weren't broken, the owners probably didn't know how to use them anyway. By implication, the idea that firearms were widely owned in early America was a concoction of modern day gun-rights ideologues. The problem with this argument was that Bellesiles lacked evidence. He misrepresented sources, distorted data, and cited historical documents that no one could prove existed. After his employer, Emory University, investigated the claims against him, Bellesiles resigned his tenured professorship.

The retraction of the Bancroft brings to a close the last interesting controversy of the Bellesiles affair. Although some of the Bancroft jurors had been loath to reconsider their decision (how do you like the book now, Arthur Goren, Jan Ellen Lewis, and Mary P. Ryan?), this latest decision puts to rest any doubts about the academic consensus on whether *Arming America* ever deserved to be called "a myth-busting tour de force" or a "classic work of significant scholarship with inescapable policy implications," as Bellesiles's now much-embarrassed champions once claimed. ♦



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# Casual

## Joyeux Noël

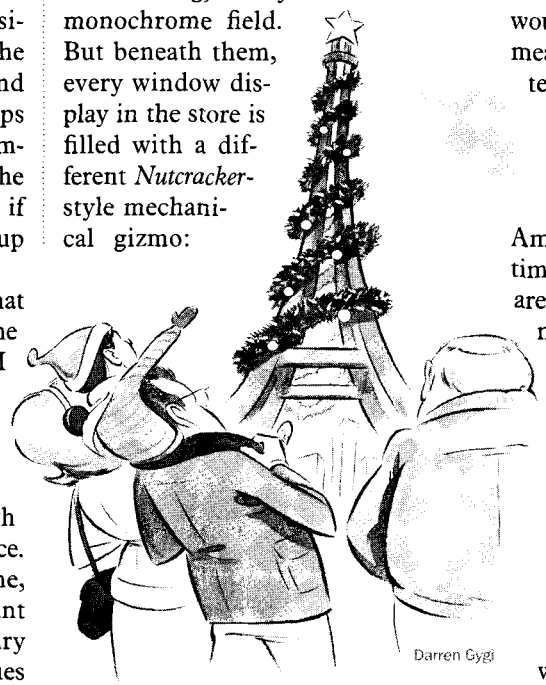
Last week I was driving through Paris with a bunch of American journalists. One of them mentioned that the last time he'd been in Paris, there had been a big Ferris wheel in the Tuileries gardens, as there is every summer. Then someone else mentioned the subtlety with which the city's civil engineers had designed and positioned the ride: If you stand in the center of the Arc de Triomphe and look down the Avenue des Champs Elysées, the wheel's hub is superimposed on the tip of the obelisk in the Place de la Concorde, so it looks as if the obelisk is holding the thing up like a pinwheel.

Following the despicable rule that the more deeply impressed one is, the less impressed one should appear, I said, "So much of French design is like that. It's like a couple of kids got together and said, *Hey! This'd be neat!*"

Had I been one of the people with me, I would have laughed in my face. Because if Paris didn't impress me, then what was *my* idea of elegant design? My front yard? My laundry room? But the first of my colleagues to speak was slightly less jaded (or slightly less of a jerk), and said, "Yes, but the whole secret of Paris is that it so often *is* neat."

He has a point, particularly these days. In no season is Paris neater than at Christmas. All the shopping streets have their trees and lamps strung with lights. The department store displays are ingenious. Galéries Lafayette, on the Boulevard Haussmann, has bulbs strung along the whole of its football-field-sized façade to resemble a blue, red, green, yellow, and white cathedral. The Hédiard *épicerie* in the Place de la Madeleine has an incredibly real-looking illuminated ribbon pulled around it, so the whole building appears to have been wrapped as a present. And the Madeleine itself has a watery pattern of wavy blue lights playing on it all evening long.

But the best-decorated store in all of Paris is across the river. The Bon Marché on the Rue de Sèvres is lit in a very simple way: It just has billows of twinkling, snowy bulblets in one monochrome field. But beneath them, every window display in the store is filled with a different *Nutcracker*-style mechanical gizmo:




hammering elves, rotating tops, spinning ballerinas, puppet musicians. And in a touching seasonal exception to Paris's default position of extreme child-unfriendliness, there are little stiles of three-inch-high steps leading up to gangplanks running along the displays so children can climb up and press their runny noses against the glass.

For a country that according to cliché has spent the last hundred years of its politics trying to expunge every remaining vestige of Christianity from its public life, France puts an implausible amount of effort into prettying up the place for the holy season. This earnestness about Christmastime seems to be un-uprootable from the French as a people, since it follows them even into immigration. When I was a child outside of Boston, it was to the French-Canadian neighborhoods in Salem—with their double-decker houses blanketed or boxed or crisscrossed with the wildest blue, green, red, purple, and orange lights, and illuminated reindeer on the roofs and Santas in the yards—that my parents would drive us for a real kid-dazzling treat.

Where'd the French get this knack? Someone once described France as a "high-context" society. I wouldn't dare try to explain what that means, except to say that, in the context of Christmas, the French are rather the opposite of the blasé and jaded lot that they try to pass themselves off as. Which is to say, they're the opposite of what Americans *actually* are at Christmastime. Given half a chance, the French are both a lot more earnest and a lot more joyous.

On every street corner in Paris you can smell Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire. Ever smell them in America? I doubt it. The guy who wrote the Nat King Cole song was probably named Jacques. All over Paris in the winter months, you can see women in beautiful fur jackets and stoles. In Washington, meanwhile, the harridans of PETA spend the Christmas season slouching back and forth in front of Neiman Marcus baying for "animal rights," while their male fellow-activists—next to whom your average French *coiffeur* looks like John Wayne—threaten to throw paint on old ladies wearing fur (but not on young delinquents wearing leather).

To spend the Christmas season in Paris is to realize just how . . . how *Jacobin* our own Christmases have become. And that, for this month at least, we're among the last people who should dismiss the French as a bunch of humorless, effete, preening, hypocritical snobs.

**Christopher Caldwell**



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## Deterrence Reconsidered

In his excellent article "The Obsolescence of Deterrence" (Dec. 9) Charles Krauthammer fails, I believe, to bring out a very important point.

In the long-lasting and very bitter Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, both sides worked on the reasonable assumption that their opponents were sane, rational, and not self-destructive.

In our present conflict with the Muslim world, that is not the case, and it would be a fatal error not to recognize it. The Muslims, as demonstrated by the suicide bombers in Israel, obviously do not hesitate to sacrifice themselves in order to achieve their political goals. Therefore, it would not be unreasonable to expect that, say, somebody like Saddam Hussein or Muammar Qaddafi would be willing to sacrifice a few million of his own people in order to attain his political objective, such as the destruction of Israel.

Gerardo Joffe
*San Francisco, CA*

In order for deterrence to work, those whom one would deter must actually believe that unacceptable consequences would befall them if they were to act. Charles Krauthammer leaves implicit a critical point that I believe should be explicit in "The Obsolescence of Deterrence."

Recall that part of bin Laden's analysis rested on the perception that America was a paper tiger: It bugged out of Vietnam, it stood around befuddled while an Iranian rabble imprisoned scores of diplomatic and military personnel for a year and a half, it fled from Lebanon after attacks on diplomatic and military targets, it was unwilling to take casualties in Mogadishu or in the last war against Iraq, and it was fairly desultory in its responses to the first World Trade Center bombing, the African embassy bombings, and the USS *Cole* bombing.

It does not matter how many weapons we have if our enemies are convinced that we will not use them. Deterrence may yet be an effective self-defense tool, but we need to convince actual and prospective enemies that (1) we have the will to strike and (2) when we do, the impact upon them will be fearsome. Swift, effective military action removing, replacing, and (hopefully) punishing Saddam Hussein would go a long way toward creating conditions for deterrence to be effective once again.

Richard Levine
*San Francisco, CA*

Charles Krauthammer's article brands so-called "Cold War nostalgia" as a misguided public sentiment predicated on a highly selective memory. In his attempt to simplify and debase the antiwar movement, the author overlooks three critical points.

First, Saddam Hussein has never threatened to use weapons of mass destruction against the United States, but in the event he does, there is still no precedent for the failure of nuclear deterrence—except perhaps with Israel's restraint from retaliating against SCUD missile attacks in 1991. The fact that Hussein declined to use chemical and biological agents in the Gulf War seems unimportant.

Second, the psychological impact of a deterrent strategy, which translates into leverage for both the rival state and antiwar movement, has manifested today only as a result of careful policy linkage between Hussein's regime and a spontaneous network of terrorists.

Finally, the author brands the idea of unilateral disarmament during the Cold War as a "disastrous" solution. At least 18 countries that possessed or very nearly acquired nuclear weapons in the past have now voluntarily forsworn possession. Each of these nations enjoys a peaceful existence and is presently more afflicted by government corruption than the threat of nuclear war. As threats change, so too do the methods for dealing with them. A preemptive doctrine is not an indictment of Kissinger, but is rather a substitution for missile defense. And the absorption of deterrence by the antiwar movement today is no more hypocritical than Reagan's defense initiative was in the 1980s.

Jordan Gottfried
*Charlottesville, VA*

Charles Krauthammer's cogent analysis of deterrence weakens at the end of the article where he argues that overthrowing Saddam for his refusal to relinquish WMD would be a clear demonstration to other dictators that in acquiring them "they purchase extinction" and will not only be disarmed but dethroned. Inherent in this view is the assumption that we can or will implement a policy of preemption where WMD are acquired. But mustering support for such action takes an extraordinary effort, the kind that cannot be undertaken regularly or for that matter economically. It also seems clear, based on the recent shillyshallying at the United Nations, that it will not succeed regularly, since few of our allies are willing to place their economic interests in a position that is secondary to their strategic ones.

While I agree with Krauthammer's premises and many of his conclusions, I think that preemption as an option will have to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and will likely be rejected in most instances, just as we are rejecting it in the case of Korea now. Squishy as it may sound, we will have to use a range of responses from diplomatic and commercial sanctions to restrictions on travel and exchanges. Deterrence will remain in the arsenal and, as with most problems, how to deal with nations who acquire WMD remains complex and not amenable to



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solution by the application of easily stated principles, such as those Krauthammer submits.

DAVID M. LIPTON
*Boston, MA*

## PEDICURE POLITICS

AS I WAS GETTING A PEDICURE SO I could wear my strappy sandals to the ball, I was reading "The Other Nine-Tenths" by Fred Barnes (Dec. 9) and just had to reply. First of all, spare me the lament of how horrible it is to be informed. Try being the only informed person you know. Welcome to my world.

I am a stay-at-home mom whose best friend is the local radio guy, Hoppy. I have never even met him. The rest of the moms in my moms group watch *The Bachelor* and wouldn't even recognize Dick Cheney. I have stopped watching the Sunday shows since Brinkley left, but always catch the highlights on Rush. At least you get paid to pay attention!

MARY JANE WOOD
*Morgantown, WV*

## RESERVATIONS ABOUT AZ

THANKS FOR THE LARGELY EXCELLENT "Fundraising Arizona" by Clint Bolick (Dec. 2) about the recent election fiasco in Arizona, which I experienced as a GOP activist and volunteer for Matt Salmon. I wholeheartedly agree with all his points regarding the Clean Elections Act, but must add that he omitted mentioning another major contributing factor in the November election results.

There were three propositions on the ballot involved with different aspects of Indian gaming in Arizona. Two failed and one passed, but the main effect of the propositions was that they got the populations on all of our numerous reservations out voting in force. Proponents of the three propositions had significant registration drives and worked hard to get out the vote throughout the campaign.

Combined with a somewhat exhausted and divided Republican party, plus the lack of funds, the propositions may have been what tipped the balance. We failed to get out our voters and they succeeded. The canvass shows a record vote on the reservations. The Republicans still have six of eight Republican congressmen and the legislature is Republican, as are most statewide offices, but Clean Elections with the special interest vote and the turnout on the reservations lost the governorship for the Republican party.

SUZANNE H. JAMISON
*Tucson, AZ*

## CHIVALRY OR CONTRACT?

JON L. BREEN IS JUSTIFIED in suspecting that Donald Bain is the ghostwriter behind Margaret Truman's mystery series ("The Ghost and Miss Truman," Nov. 18). The real mystery is why Bain is so coy about identifying the well-known author whose work he authors so well. I named him as Truman's ghost in *Spy* magazine in 1988, in an article called "People Who Need People." Only chivalry—and possibly a contract clause—could explain why Bain still clings to his sheet.

MARK LASSWELL
*New York, NY*

## ANGRY WHITE MALE

MY HAT GOES OFF to Heather Mac Donald for writing "Dartmouth Does Diversity" (Dec. 2).

While enrolled in an undergraduate program in a San Francisco university in the early nineties, I observed firsthand what Mac Donald writes about. Administrators, professors, and students spent more time talking about diversity and cultural sensitivity than about any other subject. Class discussions regularly turned into precarious voyages through "mine-fields" as professors tried to steer us away from hot topics. All the while, malleable students competed with one another in defending the "ill-treated."

My experience came to a climax when one of my professors, upon finding out I had a mild stutter, decided I would complete the diversity makeup of her class by representing the "handicapped." She assumed I would be her natural ally in her daily tirades against the establishment, treatment of minorities, women, gays, and, of course, the handicapped. The interesting part came when I started to openly disagree with her. Within a matter of days, I became the class pariah and was ostracized. In the mind of my professor, I had betrayed her by inexplicably metamorphosing from a noble stutterer into a dangerous "angry, white male."

MIKE BELENKY
*San Francisco, CA*

## BURTON AND THE SAUDIS

I JUST READ DAVID TELL'S "Sultan of Spin" (Dec. 16) about Congressman Burton and his meeting with my daughter, Amjad. Tell is right on target when he describes Burton and his determination to come to the aid of kidnapped American citizens. On behalf of myself and my son Rasheed and daughter Amjad who were both kidnapped and held away from me for five years and abused, I want to thank Congressman Burton and his hardworking staff for showing these lost citizens of our great country that they are not forgotten. If this had only happened five years ago, we would be safe back home and my children would have gotten the best free education in the world.

Both Rasheed and Amjad were impressed by the humanity of Dan Burton. He represents the best that a free and truly democratic country stands for—he took up a difficult and risky cause. God bless you.

MONICA STOWERS
*Riyadh, Saudi Arabia*

CORRECTION: Monica Stowers was mistakenly identified as Monica Powers in our editorial last week. THE WEEKLY STANDARD regrets the error.

• • •

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ADVERTISEMENT

# "The Christmas Card"

We hope that happy dreams come true. Maybe this is one that did.

Uncle Sam wanted to do something for Ronald Reagan this Christmas. It might be, he thought, his last one on planet earth. Sam cleared it with heaven. That exalted place added its special blessing.

So Uncle Sam called on the "Savior of his country," who sat quietly and alone upon his chair in the beautiful Lincoln Memorial that graced the hallowed ground of Washington, D.C. The martyred President listened fascinated to all his Uncle had to say. "Fine, Sam. It's a great idea. I'm all for it."

Next, Sam called on Nancy Reagan. He told her all he'd done so far. He recounted what he intended to do for her husband, Ronald Reagan.

Said, Mrs. Reagan, "Well, Uncle Sam, have you cleared what you plan to do with the proper authorities? You know about my husband's illness."

"Oh yes," Sam assured her, "It's been approved by the highest authority as well as President Lincoln himself."

"That's good," replied Nancy, "it's up to you and in God's hand if Ronnie understands and desires to go along with it. Let's hope the Good Lord works a minor miracle and that Ronnie understands."

The minor miracle ensued. Ronald Reagan understood.

Later on, Christmas Eve, a limousine pulled up to the foot of the deserted and closed for the night Lincoln Memorial. The lovely city of Washington glistened in an evening gown of soft white snow. The moon and twinkling stars shone down upon her compelling grandeur. Uncle Sam, Nancy and Ronald Reagan ascended the steps to where Abraham Lincoln sat looking benevolently down at them. "Welcome, welcome," he greeted the three. "I'm so happy you all could come."

"Glad to see you too, Abe," said Uncle Sam. "As I said I would, I got the Reagans."

"Wonderful Sam," exclaimed Mr. Lincoln as he climbed down a temporary ladder to stand on the same level as the visitors. "Now, let's pretend we've known each other well for years. You call me Abe. I call you Nancy and Ron. Sam and I are old friends."

"Great, Mr. Pres—" Ronald Reagan replied, corrected himself and then went on, "great Abe, What crosses your mind sitting there all day looking toward the far horizon?"

"The future, Ron, the future. I'm looking to the future. You know I think about what I hear sitting there. Today, I heard a visitor say 'man is born to die.' Then his friend said, 'No, you're wrong. Man is born to live and then to die.'"

"That's wonderful," Nancy Reagan said to him, "You know my Ronnie's that way. He welcomes the future as a daily companion, even a best friend."

"That's wonderful too," replied Abraham Lincoln. Then turning to Mr. Reagan, he continued. "Ron, you made the party a big success. I don't mean just the GOP, I mean the party that lasted eight years, all happy ones, for all America."

"Thanks, Abe. I hope so. I owe it all to Nancy," and he gently kissed her hand.

"That's not quite so," said Nancy Reagan. "Ronnie heard a friend say, when you shake another's hand, it's not the color of it. It's the friendship in it. He thought of you when he heard that."

"I understand, it doesn't surprise me about Ron. He's a listener," Mr. Lincoln told Nancy. "He'd remember hearing that."

"Abe, I have to tell you something else about Ron, he wouldn't tell you," Uncle Sam said. "Ron was more than a president to the people, he was a friend. He'd say about being a friend, that right after it was born the first thing friendship ever learned was to count to two."

"Wonderful, it's so good to hear. That's you, Ron." Mr. Lincoln then led the three to the temporary ladder. He had them climb to the top of the pedestal upon which stood his famous chair. He instructed Ronald Reagan. "Now, Ron you sit down where I sit. It suits you better than me in any event."

"No, Abe, no never!" exclaimed President Reagan.

"Just do as I say," smiled Mr. Lincoln. Next, he arranged Uncle Sam standing beside Nancy and he next to Sam behind the chair upon which now sat Mr. Reagan. He then said, "Nancy you're next to Sam. Mary Todd might get jealous of my standing next to you."

"So that's the price I have to pay," Nancy told him, laughingly.

"Now, friends," continued Mr. Lincoln. "That's Matthew Brady, the famous Civil War photographer down there. He's here to take our picture. It's going to be our Christmas card. Yours and mine for our fellow citizens up there in Paradise. They'd never believe it here on earth. Some day they will see it too."

Matthew Brady called for absolute stillness. He took the picture and left, thanking them profusely.

The three visitors climbed down again. Mr. Lincoln sat down in his chair. A second before vanishing into darkness, Nancy, Ronald Reagan and Uncle Sam turned back to Abraham Lincoln. They waved a last goodbye.

Mr. Lincoln called after them, "Merry Christmas, my dear friends. You made it a happy one for me. You'll forever be in my thoughts and never out of sight."

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the weekly Standard

# A Clone by any Other Name

Truth, famously the first casualty of war, is now falling victim to the latest skirmish in the biotech wars. Euphemism and doublespeak are the order of the day, and not because of timid politicians or shameless propagandists, but, shockingly, because of the eagerness of a leading university to embark on human cloning research.

Earlier this week, Stanford University announced the creation of a $12 million research center that would, among other things, produce cloned human embryos for biomedical research. This research—which its advocates now call "nuclear transplantation to produce human pluripotent stem cell lines"—involves the insertion of a person's DNA into an enucleated human egg. This produces a living, dividing, developing human embryo—a genetic copy or clone of a living individual—which researchers plan to destroy in order to extract its stem cells.

Over the past few years, such cloning experiments have been the subject of widespread public debate. In July 2001, the U.S. House of Representatives passed, by more than 100 votes, a ban on all human cloning, including the procedure now embraced by Stanford. In July 2002, the President's Council on Bioethics recommended a four-year moratorium on the production and use of cloned human embryos for biomedical research, so that the nation might debate the moral and scientific issues fully and fairly before deciding whether or not to cross this moral boundary.

Stanford's announcement is important: In a country still weighing the significance and moral dangers of taking the first steps toward human cloning, a major research university has decided to plunge ahead. Stanford seems to believe that the question of whether to harvest and exploit cloned human embryos—and perhaps eventually cloned human fetuses—is one for scientists and internal university review boards, not citizens and their democratic institutions.

Yet the Stanford scientists apparently can't decide whether to proceed brashly, as triumphant benefactors of mankind whom Congress cannot stop, or with serpentine guile, hiding what they are doing by describing it in terms impenetrable (and misleading) even to an ethically concerned public. So far—as multiple statements, press conferences, and news stories attest—they have done both. They have lied. They have misled. And they have sown confusion.

On December 10, the Associated Press reported: "Stanford Reveals Human Embryo Clone Plan." Claiming the story was "incorrect," the university immediately issued the following statement:

> Creating human stem cell lines is not equivalent to reproductive cloning. The first step in the process of creating a stem cell line involves transferring the nucleus from a cell to an egg and allowing the egg to divide. This is the same first step as in reproductive cloning. However in creating a stem cell line, cells are removed from the developing cluster. These cells can go on to form many types of tissues, but cannot on their own develop into a human.

A few hours later, the AP story—same author, different spin—had been changed: "Stanford to Develop Human Stem Cells." The same day, Stanford's spokeswoman told the *Washington Post*, "We're not cloning embryos, and we're not going to clone embryos."

The problem, however, is that this is not true. The "developing cluster" described in Stanford's own statement *is an embryo*. It is uniquely desired by scientists because it is a *cloned embryo*. And if implanted into a woman's uterus, it could develop into a *cloned human child*.

For clarity on this matter, we need turn to no other authority than the head of Stanford's new center, Dr. Irving Weissman himself.

In January 2002, Weissman chaired a National Academy of Sciences panel that issued a report on the "Scientific and Medical Aspects of Human Reproductive Cloning." The report called for a moratorium on the production of cloned children, while also describing the scientific promise of "nuclear transplantation to produce stem cells"—what most people at the time were calling "therapeutic cloning." The report put it this way:

> The experimental procedures required to produce stem cells through nuclear transplantation would consist of the transfer of a somatic cell nucleus from a patient into an enucleated egg, the in vitro culture of



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the *embryo* [emphasis added] to the blastocyst stage, and the derivation of a pluripotent ES cell line from the inner cell mass of this blastocyst.

In other words: To get the stem cells, you have to produce and destroy a cloned human embryo.

In February 2002, Weissman testified before the President's Council on Bioethics. He reaffirmed that the entity produced by transferring a nucleus into an unfertilized egg would grow "to form the blastocyst stage of embryo development, the pre-implantation embryo." And he agreed that such a cloned blastocyst destined to be disaggregated for its stem cells would be identical to the cloned blastocyst required to initiate a pregnancy—that is, to initiate the gestation of a cloned human being.

By Weissman's own definition, what Stanford announced earlier this week was, in fact, its intention to pursue embryonic cloning, even as the university simultaneously denied what it was doing. A calf does not cease to be a calf because we have produced it for veal. A cloned embryo, produced for its stem cells, does not cease to be an embryo.

Fearing public backlash, the university decided to muddy the waters even further. It released yet another statement saying that its researchers would not pursue embryonic cloning right away, but that they might do so in the future, and that in any case Weissman does not believe that producing cloned embryos by nuclear transplantation is really embryonic cloning at all. More doubletalk from one of our leading institutions of higher learning.

If we are to have sound public deliberation about these weighty matters, universities and scientists owe us spin-free speech about what they are doing. Even more important, we need public debate and political leadership—from the president, in Congress, and in the states. President Bush, when he announced his decision on federal funding for embryonic stem cell research in August 2001, declared, "We have arrived at that Brave New World that seemed so distant in 1932, when Aldous Huxley wrote about human beings created in test tubes."

Today, one of our leading universities is poised to take us further down that dehumanizing road. Our elected leaders need to intervene—now, not later—by enacting at least a moratorium on such morally questionable experiments.

—*William Kristol and Eric Cohen*


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Saddam Hussein has submitted Iraq's latest account of its weapons of mass destruction programs. It is, as Connecticut Senator Joe Lieberman said, "a 12,000-page, 100 pound lie."

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By issuing yet another lie, Saddam Hussein stands once again in open defiance of the international community.

It is time to hold him to account. As President Bush said on November 8: "The time has come for the Iraqi people to escape oppression, find freedom and live in hope."

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# A Very Sorry Majority Leader

## Trent Lott apologizes, over and over.

**BY STEPHEN F. HAYES**

AFTER A WEEK of confusion, Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott held a press conference Friday in an attempt to clarify his position on segregation. "Segregation is a stain on our nation's soul," said Lott. "Let me be clear: Segregation and racism are immoral."

Stop for a moment and think about that. Almost half a century after the Supreme Court's landmark ruling in *Brown* v. *Board of Education*, almost 40 years after the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and it's necessary to report that the nation's third-ranking Republican does, in fact, reject segregation. That commentators around the country have spent more than a week debating whether Trent Lott is racist or just inept is a measure of the damage his comments have done. It was a bad week for Trent Lott and for the Republican party.

The saga began Thursday, December 5, at a now infamous 100th birthday tribute to Senator Strom Thurmond. Lott, like the other speakers, heaped praise on Thurmond for his long career. Then Lott went too far. "I want to say this about my state. When Strom Thurmond ran for president we voted for him. We're proud of it. And if the rest of the country had followed our lead, we wouldn't have had all these problems over all these years, either."

Thurmond, of course, ran for president as a States' Rights Dixiecrat in 1948. As the name suggests, the Dixiecrats split from the Democrats for one reason: to defend segregation. Even the Army, Thurmond used to say back then, couldn't force whites to share their "swimming pools" and "chuches" with the "Nigra race."

Earl Keleny

Although many journalists were present at the recent birthday party, few quoted Lott's offensive remarks in their stories the next day. ABC News online mentioned the comments, and *National Journal*'s "Hotline," an inside-the-Beltway political newsletter, served as a megaphone, running the story under the headline "Lott Proud of Dixiecrat Role." Liberal Internet journalist Josh Micah Marshall began commenting on his website, *talkingpointsmemo.com*. And late Friday afternoon, *Washington Post* reporter Thomas Edsall called Lott's office for a clarification.

Instead, he got a rationalization and even a mild rebuke. "Senator Lott's remarks were intended to pay tribute to a remarkable man who led a remarkable life. To read anything more into these comments is wrong." Those words appeared in the *Post* story Saturday. And while that article also contained stunned reactions and strong criticism from Washington observers, Lott wasn't worried. At a holiday party thrown that night by ABC reporter Sam Donaldson, Lott told guests that his comments weren't a big deal, and that Strom Thurmond believed principally in a strong national defense.

Lott's second written statement came Monday, after Tim Russert raised the affair on *Meet the Press*, and other Sunday shows also discussed it. The statement read: "This was a lighthearted celebration of the 100th birthday of legendary Senator Strom Thurmond. My comments were not an endorsement of his positions of over 50 years ago, but of the man and his life."

These two Lott statements didn't work for fairly simple reasons. The first one blamed those who were offended by Lott's remark, and the second one plainly contradicted his words. By Tuesday, amid growing criticism of the original tribute to Thurmond's presidential bid and Lott's ineffective clarifications, his office released another written statement. "A poor choice of words conveyed to some the impression that I embraced the discarded policies of the past. Nothing could be further from the truth and I apologize for my statement to anyone who was offended by it." Critics jumped on this statement, too, pointing out that Lott chose a descriptive word, "discarded," rather than a judgmental one.

Early in the week, there was already a dramatic difference in the way the comments were received by Republican staff on Capitol Hill and their bosses. Younger staff members seemed to grasp the offensiveness of the substance of Lott's comments and

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the extent of the political damage. The same cannot be said of Republican elected officials. The early strategy—to a senator—was to keep quiet. "If you're going to shoot the king," said one aide, "you'd better be sure you kill him."

"By Wednesday and Thursday," Lott would say later, "it got quite active." Lott's chief of staff began calling local conservative activists to enlist their support. His message was direct and, some believe, threatening: We will remember who is supporting us in this time of need, and you'll want to be on that list.

Lott, too, was on the phone. While many of his Senate colleagues had avoided criticizing their leader in public, few had spoken on Lott's behalf. Lott had already spoken to a handful of Republican senators, and by midweek he started calling the rest to explain his comments, to assure them that the worst was over, and to encourage them to offer their public support.

Lott took those explanations public himself on Wednesday, in phone interviews with conservative talk radio host Sean Hannity and CNN's Larry King. (Lott would later explain that phone interviews were the best he could do since he was vacationing in Key West, where there aren't television stations to provide a studio. As a measure of sincerity, that didn't help.) His apologies were stronger, but so were his rationalizations. "When I think back about Strom Thurmond over the years, what I have seen is a man that was for a strong national defense and economic development and balanced budgets and opportunity, and that's the kinds of things that I really had in mind."

The appearances failed to quell the growing chorus calling for Lott to step down. Black groups called the remarks "racist," and with virtual unanimity—excepting Pat Buchanan, Bob Novak, and Sean Hannity—conservative commentators ripped Lott. Democrats, in a display of moral courage they reserve for Republicans and race, piled on. Al Gore, perhaps the most accomplished race-baiter in politics today, ran toward cameras everywhere to express his horror. John Kerry, who in an unrelated development last week announced a presidential exploratory effort, called for Lott to step down as majority leader.

At the White House, meanwhile, the administration debated the proper response. On the one hand, it has never been President Bush's style to insert himself into a controversy. On the other, the substance of Lott's offensive remarks required a strong presidential rebuke. White House spokesman Ari Fleischer had said earlier in the week, "From the president's point of view, Senator Lott has addressed this issue. He has apologized for his statement, and the president understands that that is the final word from Senator Lott in terms of the fact that he said something and has apologized for it." Fleischer said Bush supports Lott as majority leader "unquestionably."

But those comments came before Lott's phone interviews, and by Thursday it had become clear that Bush would say something about the issue at a speech he was scheduled to give in Philadelphia. As Bush's staff discussed whether the president should single out Lott by name, Bush settled the debate personally. He would mention Lott directly.

"Recent comments by Senator Lott do not reflect the spirit of our country," said Bush. "He has apologized, and rightly so. Every day our nation was segregated was a day that America was unfaithful to our founding ideals. And the founding ideals of our nation and, in fact, the founding ideals of the political party I represent was, and remains today, the equal dignity and equal rights of every American." The president went on to say that suggestions that segregation is acceptable were "offensive" and "wrong," but Fleischer told reporters that Bush did not expect Lott to resign. Lott immediately issued a statement embracing the president's criticism.

By Friday, tensions between the White House and Lott had grown. Sources say Lott made clear that if he were forced to step down from the Senate leadership, he would also likely resign his Senate seat, a significant development because Mississippi's current governor, Ronnie Musgrove, is a Democrat. He would appoint a replacement for Lott, presumably a Democrat, leaving the Republicans with a precarious one-seat margin.

When word leaked that Lott had scheduled a press conference for late Friday afternoon, preceded by a conference call with Republican senators, many on Capitol Hill assumed he would announce that he was stepping down as majority leader. He didn't.

"I have asked and am asking for people's forbearance and forgiveness as I continue to learn from my own mistakes and as I continue to grow as both a person and a leader."

Asking for forgiveness is reasonable—everyone makes mistakes. But wanting to do so and remain leader is not. The controversy is no longer just about Trent Lott. It's about the Republican party. Despite what Democrats would like to suggest, this is not because most or even many Republicans are secretly nostalgic for segregation. They aren't. Rather, it's because Lott failed to deal swiftly and seriously with the substance of his original comment. And it's because Republican officeholders, however understandable their instinct for self-preservation, failed to speak out strongly against one of their own on a matter of principle.

What's clear is this: The more Trent Lott speaks as the third-ranking Republican in America, the more his problem becomes the party's problem. "I want the Republican party not to be hurt by this," Lott said Friday. "I want us to find a way to reach out and to build on our mistakes that we have made in the past." *Us* to find a way? *Our* mistakes? *We* have made?

"I'm not about to resign for an accusation for something I'm not," Lott declared, responding to accusations that he is racist.

Perhaps he would consider stepping down for something he has become: a burden for his party. ♦



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# Yes, There's a Bush Domestic Agenda

## And Social Security reform is a major part of it.

**BY FRED BARNES**

THINK PRESIDENT BUSH has put off reforming Social Security until 2005? Not necessarily. Republican congressman Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania, who's eager to enact reform legislation next year, raised the issue with Bush at a White House Christmas party. He was very encouraged by Bush's response. Meanwhile Bush adviser Karl Rove dispatched an aide, Barry Jackson, to give a PowerPoint presentation to Cato Institute reformers on the success in the midterm election of candidates who advocated using Social Security funds for individual investment accounts. And Rove encouraged Cato, which has spearheaded the reform drive, to stage a public forum on Capitol Hill with successful candidates. Cato did just that on December 4 with "The Third Rail is Dead—Social Security and Election 2002," an event featuring Toomey and senator-elect John Sununu of New Hampshire. Also, White House aides have urged members of Congress to step up the discussion of Social Security reform in early 2003.

What these bits of evidence point to is a White House effort to set the stage for overhauling Social Security in 2003 or 2004 and give the president a humongous domestic policy triumph. Bush, however, is wary of getting out in front of the issue now. He told Bob Woodward, author of *Bush At War*: "I will seize the opportunity to achieve big goals." But he had to be asked twice at his postelection press conference on November 7 before he would broach Social Security. "I think the Social Security debate is an incredibly important debate," he said. Bush insisted the type of reform he and most Republicans favor should not be labeled partial privatization. "We call them personal savings accounts . . . so that people would have the option, at their choice, to manage their own money." The plan Bush endorsed as a candidate would let workers take a portion of their payroll tax (2 percent of income) and invest it.

For now, the White House prefers to stay in the background and prod congressional reformers into coming up with a consensus plan on Social Security. That won't be easy. GOP representative Jim Kolbe of Arizona says, "Congress never does that. It takes presidential leadership." Bush's own Commission to Strengthen Social Security failed to reach agreement on a single reform scheme earlier this year. Instead, it offered three models. In the House, there are already at least four plans, and the White House is inviting even more. "There's encouragement to let a thousand bills bloom," says Michael Tanner, Cato's Social Security expert. That's putting it kindly. Just agreeing on who should be consulted is proving difficult. Democratic representative Charles Stenholm of Texas says the White House must be involved in the meetings. Others aren't as insistent.

The surprising thing is that the Social Security issue has arisen at all. The soft economy and weak stock market were supposed to have killed the issue, at least temporarily. Then a half-dozen Republican Senate candidates decided to tout privatization of part of Social Security, and all of them won: Sununu, Elizabeth Dole in North Carolina, Lindsey Graham in South Carolina, Jim Talent in Missouri, Saxby Chambliss in Georgia, Norm Coleman in Minnesota. This was a reversal of the 1986 election, when Republicans lost six close Senate races chiefly because of Democratic attacks on Social Security. Democrats mounted a new round of attacks this year, but they drew little response. And despite more than two years of a bad market, public opinion continues to favor private accounts. An exit poll for U.S. Seniors found that 57 percent favor them. Among voters under 35, 72 percent want to invest part of their payroll tax. And support doesn't drop much among those 35-44 (68 percent) and 45-54 (65 percent). Polls by Gallup and John Zogby have found roughly the same level of support.

Another surprise is the emergence of well-financed pressure groups backing reform. One is the Coalition for the Modernization and Protection of America's Social Security, funded by business groups such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers. Another group, Social Security Choice, recently opened an office in Washington. The libertarian Cato Institute, which has kept the issue alive for two decades, is also a formidable presence in Washington. And suddenly, too, press coverage of the reform drive has become less hostile. In a December 2 editorial, the *Washington Post* said: "Given all of the other issues that loom ahead, this may be the last chance to talk calmly about Social Security for a long time, and the opportunity shouldn't be missed."

It probably will be if the president takes a pass. Kolbe believes the single most important factor in forging a congressional majority for reform is Bush. In a letter to Bush in November, he, Stenholm, Toomey, GOP representative Nick Smith of Michigan, and Democratic representatives Cal Dooley of California and Alan Boyd of Florida said some members of Congress "don't want to accept the urgent need for reform. . . . Only with your leadership on Social Security will we gain the momentum necessary to

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begin legislative action early next year." Stenholm says a public role by Bush is crucial to attracting Democratic votes. "We can bring a reasonable number of Democrats if the president will lead," he told me. In the House, the best guess is as many as 25 Democrats and nearly all 229 Republicans would back reform. Putting together a Senate majority would be more dicey.

But nobody said it would be easy, only that letting workers invest part of their payroll tax—and actually own the account—and making Social Security solvent would be a historic achievement. Should Bush pull it off, he'd attain a "big goal" of the sort he relishes (as does Rove). But he'll have to seize the moment—and the moment is now. The time for Bush to start a pro-reform campaign is the State of the Union address on January 28. Tanner of Cato has a simple calculation of whether the president is serious. "If we get a sentence [in the speech], then we may be talking 2005," Tanner said. "If we get a paragraph, we should be looking to the fall." That's fall 2003, and none too soon. ♦

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# Larry Lindsey Was Right

## The economy's okay, but that didn't save him.

**BY IRWIN M. STELZER**

OLD WINE in new bottles. That's what the shakeup of the administration's economic team seems to come to. Since it is the president who will determine just what he wants to put to the Congress when he delivers his State of the Union message, most likely on January 28, the policy implications of the switch from Paul O'Neill to John Snow at Treasury, and from Larry Lindsey to Stephen Friedman at the National Economic Council, won't affect Bush's "stimulus"—oops, make that "growth"—package. (The White House has banned the use of the word "stimulus," since it implies that the economy is not doing too well.)

Of course, to the extent that presentation trumps substance, there may be sense to the shift. O'Neill, who often said the right thing at the wrong time and in the wrong tone, is not the sort of guy you send to persuade waverers to support you. And Lindsey, about whom more below, did love the intellectual excitement of a good argument so much that he was not always sensitive to the ego-damaging consequences of his triumphs over the lower-IQ types that people the halls of Congress.

Still, any benefits of the change in personnel must be weighed against the costs. And in the near term, these costs are, as economists like to say, non-trivial. By making these personnel changes the president has lent credence to Democratic charges that his economic program is somewhere between nonexistent and a complete failure, that the massive tax cuts he (with Democratic help) pushed through have not shored up the economy, and that Republican "trickle-down" economics might be wonderful for the rich but does nothing for the middle classes and the poor.

The reasons for O'Neill's forced exit need no rehearsing here. But Lindsey, who was a colleague of mine at a Washington think tank and whose zest for intellectual combat I find attractive, is the economist who got it right. He warned candidate Bush that he would be inheriting a recession, allowing Bush and Dick Cheney to repeat that warning on the campaign trail so they could hang the blame on Bill Clinton when they took office. Lindsey also framed the tax cut that was the centerpiece of Bush's successful campaign for the presidency, and helped push it through Congress—"America's first meaningful income tax cut since the 1980s," notes Amity Shlaes in the *Financial Times*. She goes on, "In the context of the goals laid out for him in 2000, Mr. Lindsey . . . did not fail." Which is why he didn't skulk off, as did O'Neill, but was prominently seated in the front row when the president announced the appointment of Snow to the Treasury post, a sure sign that Lindsey remains on extremely good terms with the president.

The pity of it is that the hand-wringing by the president's political team about the economy's condition is not rooted in the reality of what is happening beyond the Beltway.

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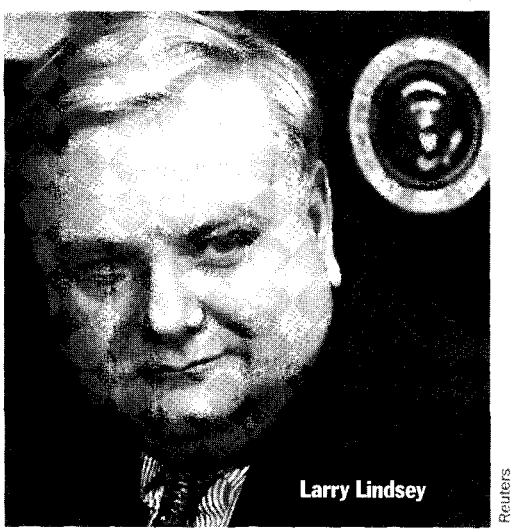
There is no reason to panic about the economy—unless your father lost an election for seeming to be uninterested in economic matters, and for underestimating the time lag between an economic recovery and the emergence of that famous "feel-good factor" that is believed by the likes of Karl Rove to swing close elections.

Never mind the president's current 62 percent approval rating: That merely matches the rating voters accorded George Bush the elder midway through what proved to be his only term in office. More important to those White House advisers now in 2004-campaign mode is the fact that a plurality of Americans (48 percent, according to the latest *Wall Street Journal*/NBC News poll) want strengthening of the economy to be at the top of the president's priority list, that 45 percent are unhappy with Bush's handling of the economy (while 47 percent express satisfaction), and that as many Americans think the country is on "the wrong track" as believe it is "headed in the right direction."

These political signals swamp the economic signs that suggest adopting the policy of Ronald Reagan, "Don't just do something, stand there." The economy grew at a 4 percent annual rate in the last quarter and will probably grow steadily in 2003, after what may be a bit of a slowdown in the last quarter of this year—although even that is not certain, given the robust start to the Christmas shopping season. The housing market remains in a healthy-to-hot condition, with resales at their highest level in six months, median house prices up almost 10 percent over last year, and indices of expected demand for new homes at their highest level in two years. Consumer confidence is on the rise; the stock market seems no longer to be on life support, as corporate profits in the third quarter beat last year's figure by a healthy 12.2 percent (the second strongest yearly gain since 1997); and real incomes continue to grow.

Even business investment "may finally be showing signs of life," to quote the *Economist*. Exclude office buildings and other non-residential construction, and the capital spending picture brightens. Investment in software and equipment is rising modestly, and outside of the troubled airline and energy sectors, capital spending grew at double-digit rates in the last quarter.

And this good news is compounded by still more good news: Productivity gains continue to surprise on the upside. And there's the problem. With productivity rising, increased output and sales do not require massive new hiring. Indeed, so strong is the improvement in productivity that many companies can meet the increased demands of their customers with fewer workers. Hence the coincidence of good economic numbers and a rising unemployment rate. And that is the number on which the administration is fixated—witness Snow's emphasis on jobs in his acceptance remarks: "We cannot be satisfied until everyone—every single person who is unemployed and seeking a job—has an opportunity to work."


Larry Lindsey

Reuters

What worries political types in the White House is the possibility that all of the above indicators of a growing economy will matter little if the unemployment rate doesn't start coming down well in advance of the 2004 elections—far enough in advance to reassure voters that their futures are secure, and to let the glow of "feel-good" suffuse their psyches by the time they enter the voting booths. The more farsighted worry, too, that some of the "imbalances" in the economy, imbalances that prey on the mind of Larry Lindsey, might just catch up with them before 2004.

The trade deficit, for instance, is now around 5 percent of GDP, widely thought to be the point at which the dollar will weaken, perhaps so rapidly that foreign investors will pull their money out of the country, forcing the Fed to raise interest rates to make dollar assets more attractive. Consumers are carrying a fairly heavy, although not unbearable, debt load, and might suddenly decide to rein in their spending, which accounts for about 70 percent of the economy. And there might be a war, with economic consequences no one can predict with confidence.

So both in order to get the economy not only growing, but growing fast enough (at around 4 percent, probably) to bring down the unemployment rate, and to insure against the emergence of longer-term problems before 2004, the White House team wants to "do something." But what?

The unfortunate fact is that there is darn little it can do to steepen the growth path on which the economy is already set for 2003. The appointment of Snow and Friedman might give the appearance of doing something, and that might have some political value. But Ari Fleischer had it right when, announcing the O'Neill and Lindsey resignations, he said, "It is fair to say the president looks at the economy as a matter that is bigger than any one person or any one expert."

Moreover, the die is already cast. The Fed has lowered interest rates, and announced that it is content to sit back and wait for the effects of the most recent reductions to work their way through the economy.



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Which they will, and soon. The mortgage refinancings that follow every interest rate reduction take 60-90 days to arrange, so the extra cash from reduced monthly payments, or from extracting equity from homes that seem to be worth more every month, will start reaching consumers' pockets about now and into the first quarter of the new year.

Taxes have already been cut so that, along with increased spending, the budget has moved from surplus into deficit, and more cuts might, as Friedman is believed to fear, drive up interest rates and further discourage investment. Existing cuts can be brought forward and made permanent, but that hardly constitutes a change in policy, since it has long been the president's intention to do just that.

Worse still, almost nothing the president gets from Congress can do much to stimulate the economy. The short-term effect of any tax cuts that put more money in consumers' pockets, especially the pockets of upper-income consumers, will in part be diluted by increased savings. Short-term incentives to invest, such as the much-discussed increase in depreciation allowances in 2003 to encourage business investment in the here and now, are said by 98 out of the 100 CEO-members of the Business Roundtable, once chaired by Snow, to be largely irrelevant to their long-term investment plans. Reducing taxation of dividends, another proposal likely to be on the president's list of tax changes, might encourage businesses to rely more on equity and less on debt to finance their expansion, but this is unlikely to have much effect on the growth rate circa 2003-2004.

Which brings us back to Snow and Friedman, both long-time exponents of balanced budgets. They will be hard pressed to explain to congressional Democrats and fiscally conservative Republicans just why they have become converts to tax cuts in a time of budget deficits. The new team, appointed over the vociferous protests of the supply-side wing of the Republican party, will argue that Bush can please both supply-siders and the budget-balancers. The president intends to offset any tax cuts he can get now with reductions in spending later. That's what the call to "reform" (read, partially privatize) Social Security will be all about, and what changes in Medicare and Medicaid will eventually be about—reducing the cost of the welfare state. It comes down to tax cuts and growth today, with reforms later to offset any shortfall after the tax cuts have worked their supply-side magic on the revenue side of the budget. If Bush can pull off that trifecta—lower taxes, more growth, and an eventually balanced budget—he just might be able to anoint his successor in 2008. ♦

# Bloomberg's Blunders

## New York City has a rendezvous with insolvency, again. BY WILLIAM TUCKER

IT WAS A JOYFUL MOMENT. In 1999 and 2000, for the first time in 50 years, New York City surpassed the rest of the nation in job growth. Silicon Alley was humming. Martha Stewart was remodeling a 1930s West Side industrial building that could lift railroad cars to the eighth floor. Mayor Giuliani was using the tax surplus to pay down old debt.

Those rosy dreams now lie beneath the ashes of the World Trade Center. More than 70,000 jobs have fled Lower Manhattan. Jersey City has become a twin skyline across the Hudson, loaded with Wall Street refugees. Electronic trading is greasing the skids. New York-based Quick and Reilly set up its e-trading operation in 1998. The company moved the division to Rhode Island in less than a year. "We always planned it for a lower-cost environment," says a company official.

Now another blow to the city. The Securities Exchange Commission is requiring financial firms to move large portions of their clearing operations out of Manhattan for security purposes. Bank of New York is shifting jobs to Florida. Morgan Stanley, once the largest tenant in the World Trade Center, is opening offices in Baltimore. Bear Stearns wants to leave just because of outlandish taxes. "Even before September 11, the high costs of doing business had been driving securities industry jobs out of New York," admitted *Crain's New York Business* last week.

In 1980, 40 percent of the securities industry was located in Manhattan. Today the figure is 25 percent—the lowest in history. New York's run as the undisputed financial capital of the world may be coming to an end.

Michael Bloomberg, the "conservative Republican" elected to revive the city economy, is proving more than inadequate to the job. Faced with a $1.5 billion budget gap this year and a $6 billion deficit in 2003, the mayor has quickly reverted to the tried-and-true stopgaps of the 1970s—raising taxes and borrowing money.

The stripping of New York's brief economic revival has exposed archeological layers of paleo-liberalism underneath the city's political culture. At bottom, New York hasn't changed since the 1960s, when John Lindsay created a social spending machine that almost bankrupted the

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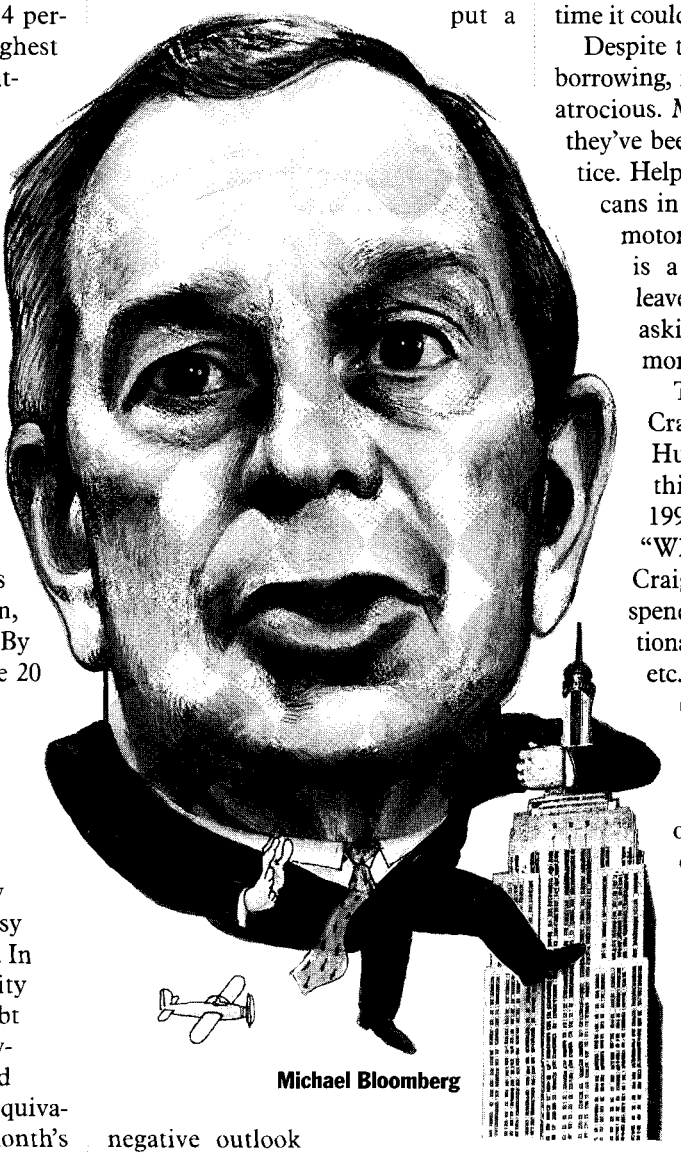
city and burdened generations of taxpayers to come.

New Yorkers remain the most highly taxed people in the nation, paying 160 percent of the national average. The city has the country's highest municipal income tax, a 4.25 percent sales tax (on top of the state's 4 percent), one of the nation's highest property taxes, plus an aggravating battery of levies such as the Municipal Assistance Corporation parking tax and a "commercial property tax," which surcharges rents in Midtown and Lower Manhattan.

On top of this, New York City is also the most heavily indebted political entity in the nation, owing $43 billion—more than any *state*. Massachusetts residents owe $3,300 per capita. New York state (in fifth place) owes $2,000 per head. New York City owes $5,300 for every man, woman, and child in the five boroughs. By 2005, debt service will consume 20 percent of the city budget—exactly the point the federal government was at when Ross Perot began his campaign in 1991.

Because of its familiarity with the bond market, New York City has always found it easy to borrow for *day-to-day expenses*. In the worst days of 1974, the city government was rolling over debt from week to week, issuing "revenue anticipation notes" and "tax anticipation notes"—the equivalent of borrowing on next month's paycheck. The creation of the Municipal Assistance Corporation (Big MAC) eventually cleaned up this act, and New York now has the most sophisticated accounting system in the country.

But all this means nothing if politicians don't exercise fiscal discipline. In 1997, bumping up against the state constitution's debt limits, the Giuliani administration created the Transitional Financing Agency (TFA), yet another off-budget authority designed to circumvent the restrictions. Five years later, TFA has more debt ($8.1 billion) than all but 12 states. Last July, Mayor Bloomberg quietly employed TFA to borrow $1.5 billion to cover this year's budget gap. Moody's put a negative outlook on the state's bond rating, already below the ratings of all 50 states. If the mayor borrows again to cover next year's projected $6 billion deficit, watch for the roof to fall in.



**Michael Bloomberg**

Illustration by Earl Keleny

Meanwhile, Governor George Pataki, facing his own $6 billion deficit, announced last week the state would borrow $4 billion on tobacco-settlement revenues that will be coming in *over the next twenty years*. In Albany they burn furniture for firewood.

Mayor Bloomberg's only other initiative has been to raise property taxes 18 percent—a request that the normally flaccid City Council processed within two days. Last time the city raised taxes, during the Dinkins administration, New York lost 300,000 jobs. This time it could be worse.

Despite this prodigious taxing and borrowing, municipal services remain atrocious. Major highways look as if they've been used for bombing practice. Helpful neighbors put garbage cans in potholes to warn passing motorists. Education, of course, is a disaster. All this often leaves thoughtful New Yorkers asking, "Where does all that money go?"

Ten years ago, Steven Craig, an economist at Hunter College, addressed this question in a landmark 1991 *City Journal* article, "Where the Money Goes." Craig compared New York spending with that of six "traditional" cities (Chicago, Boston, etc.) and four "modern" cities (Los Angeles, Dallas, and so on). Astonishingly, he found that New York spends no more—and often less—than other cities on basic services such as police, fire, roads, parks, and education. "New York's excessive spending," Craig concluded, "is due almost entirely to the simple fact that, alone among the cities studied, it has undertaken to run its own welfare state."

Take Medicaid for starters. Although a budget-buster that is already ravaging the finances of other states, Medicaid, as run by New York state, is on a different planet. With 9 percent of the nation's Medicaid patients, New York spends 15 percent of all Medicaid dollars. The Empire State spends more than California and Texas combined, even though they have three times New York's population. The Public Policy Insti-



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tute in Albany notes that if New York state spent only *twice* the national average on Medicaid, it would save $3 billion a year.

Unlike every other state, New York also requires cities and counties to split the Medicaid burden. Every dollar spent in Albany must be matched by another dollar from City Hall. Unfortunately, politicians at both ends of the Hudson have taken this as an invitation to a spending contest. Since Washington pays half the bill, every dollar spent by Albany or City Hall "leverages" three dollars from other jurisdictions. Both city and state have become especially adept at providing Medicaid coverage for the middle class. In the 1994 gubernatorial election, both George Pataki and Mario Cuomo had an elderly parent or in-law on Medicaid.

Still, Medicaid is only a small part of the picture. Welfare rolls under Mayor Giuliani were cut 50 percent, but that hasn't shrunk the welfare department. Instead, costs have simply reemerged in the Administration for Children's Services, which didn't even exist in 1995 and now absorbs $2.3 billion. The Health and Hospitals Corporation (which Giuliani tried to sell off before being blocked in the courts) costs New York City $1 billion *on top of* Medicaid allotments.

Then there's housing. Since 1943, New York has had "temporary" rent control. (The 18 percent property tax hike, by the way, was also temporary.) Builders have fled, and vacancy rates never rise above 3 percent (national vacancies are now 10 percent). Of course, such a perpetual housing shortage can only be remedied by one thing—more government spending.

Since the 1970s, New York City has spent $10 billion building and renovating housing, much of it for the middle class. This is *on top of* the city's 180,000 units of federal public housing—more than the next ten cities on the list combined. Only last week, in the midst of a budget crisis and a potentially devastating transit strike, Mayor Bloomberg announced yet another plan to borrow another $5 billion to subsidize 65,000 new housing units, many of them for the middle class.

In addition to the nation's largest public housing effort, New York also has a $483 million Department of Housing Preservation and Development designed to offset the decay and maintenance problems caused by rent control policy. HPD's strategy has been to help tenants wrestle their building away from "bad" landlords and redistribute them to "good" landlords—community action groups or even HPD employees themselves. At one point HPD owned 500,000 units, including 70 percent of Harlem. Although the redistribution is now almost complete, HPD's Office of Housing Management and Sales still absorbs $150 million—more than the city's appropriations for the Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens libraries. More than $2 billion of the mayor's new borrowing will go directly to HPD.

*New York has basically opened its doors to homeless people across the globe. The city is now looking for cruise ships to house its hordes.*

With private developers discouraged by rent control, the government must constantly offer tax abatements and exemptions for new construction. These now cost $330 million in forgone property taxes. The so-called Mitchell-Lama system—subsidized middle-class housing—costs another $200 million in tax abatements.

Then there's the Department of Homeless Services. New York has essentially opened its doors to homeless people across the globe. Anyone can show up at an evaluation center and be given lodging for the night. If intake workers fail to provide shelter, the applicant gets $150 in cash. "We get people coming right into the system from the Dominican Republic, Yemen, and Scotland," says one disgruntled DHS staffer. The department's 2002 budget was $548 million—more than the federal government spends on homelessness.

Since a 1986 consent decree, the shelter system has been administered by a single state court judge, Helen Freedman, who has tried to create a liberal utopia. "Homeless families" (i.e., welfare mothers and their children) are attracted to the shelters by the promise of being jumped to the top of the waiting lists for public housing or being granted coveted Section 8 housing vouchers. When the DHS tried to write rules ejecting shelter residents for violent behavior, Judge Freedman dismissed them as "cuckoo." Dancing to Freedman's tune, the DHS pays as much as $3,000 a month to rent out apartments where they put up homeless people—though the homeless can hold out for lodgings in neighborhoods more to their liking. Freedman has threatened to make officials sleep in the shelters themselves if they do not comply with her orders. The city is now looking for cruise ships to house the growing hordes. (Freedman herself lives in publicly subsidized middle-class housing.)

So it goes. Even as Wall Street marches out the door, the city continues to squander billions on counterproductive social programs.

As Fred Siegel illustrated in *The Future Once Happened Here*, New York's contemporary psyche was born in the glorious days of the 1930s. Back then Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia was working hand in hand with President Franklin Roosevelt to create a shining "city of the future"—by design, a free-spending welfare behemoth fueled by neverending deficit spending in Washington. Those habits have not died. Even as the city's finances spun out of control, Senators Chuck Schumer and Hillary Clinton were promising to make it all better by securing more funding from Washington.

Long before the *Daily News* writes, "Bush to NY: Drop Dead," the obituary notices will be on file. ♦



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# Making It

## *Love and success at America's finest universities*

**By David Brooks**

I've spent a lot of time on elite college campuses recently—at Yale, where I taught a course, as well as at Princeton, Dartmouth, Kenyon, and a few less rarefied schools—and while I've temporarily given up on the game of trying to diagnose the ills of America's youth, I have found that things really are different than they were when I graduated about 20 years ago.

For one thing, the students in the competitive colleges are products of an almost crystalline meritocracy. They grew up from birth being shepherded from one skill-enhancing activity to another. When you read their résumés, you learn that they got straight A's in high school and stratospheric board scores. They've usually started a few companies, cured at least three formerly fatal diseases, mastered a half dozen or so languages, and marched for breast cancer awareness through Tibet while tutoring the locals on conflict resolution skills and environmental awareness.

Their main lack is time. Students boast to each other about how little sleep they've gotten, and how long it's been since they had a chance to get back to their dorm room. Often they will tell you they have no time for serious dating. They are more likely to go out in groups—the group has replaced the couple as the primary social unit. And then, of course, they sometimes hook up for sex. I'd heard about all this, but I've been struck by how many young women will come up to me—a journalist who has been known to write about such things—after a speech and say something like "I don't have time for a relationship, so of course I hook up." They do so in the tone one might use to describe commuting routes.

**One young man let loose with a tirade about how the women on his campus had destroyed romance by making it so transactional.**

Nor did I really understand how students got from the group-gathering stage to the intimate Hook Up stage. It turns out there's an intermediate phase called the Hang Out, as in "Do you want to come hang out in my room?" The Hang Out begins with the two students ensconced in a dorm room, engaged in stilted conversation about some pseudo-intellectual topic. It then proceeds through a series of ever less cerebral conversational stages, which may last over a few Hang Out sessions, until the two are in bed. There are thus many different kinds of Hang Outs, and friends will ask each other, "Yeah, but what kind of Hang Out was it?" Similarly, there are many different kinds of Hook Ups, with infinite and ill-defined gradations of seriousness.

This is the point at which us fogies are supposed to lament the decline in courtship. Indeed, I was out drinking late one night with a group of students, and a woman to my left mentioned that she would never have a serious relationship with someone she wouldn't consider marrying. "That sounds traditional," I said to her. She responded, "I didn't say I wouldn't f— anyone I wouldn't consider marrying."

One young man from a small farm town on the other side of me heard the exchange and for the next few minutes I could see him brooding. Finally he let forth with a little tirade on how the women on his campus had destroyed romance by making it so transactional. He didn't quite call the woman and her friends sluts, but he was heading in that direction. As he spoke, I could feel the three women on my left shaking with rage, making little growls of protest

*David Brooks is a senior editor at* The Weekly Standard.



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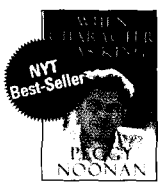


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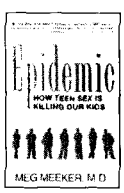


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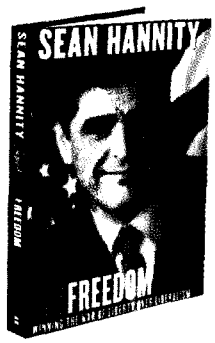


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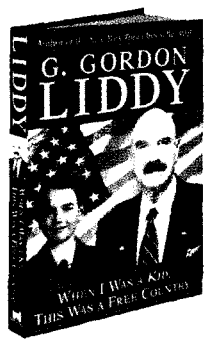


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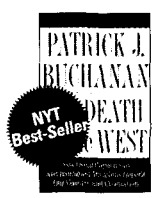


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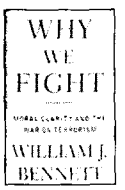


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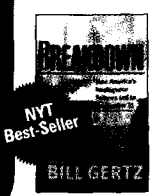


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but politely not interrupting him. I knew they were only waiting to explode. Eventually they let him have it. They didn't deny his version of reality, that sex is sometimes transactional. Their main point was that guys have been acting this way all along, so why shouldn't they.

As we left the bar the young man from the farm town walked me part of the way to my hotel, and commented that the girl who'd made the comment was really cute. He thought he might give her a call.

Now the first thing to be said about this state of affairs is that every recent survey of youth sexual activity I've seen over the past several years reveals that young people are having less sex than their predecessors were 10 and 20 years ago. Young women may talk more baldly about sex, but it is simply not true that they are more promiscuous or casual about it.

Instead, their conversational style is a reflection of the amazing self-confidence of the women on these campuses. The single most striking—if hard to define—difference between college campuses today and college campuses 20 years ago is in the nature and character of the female students. They are not only self-confident socially. They are self-confident academically, athletically, organizationally, and in every other way.

There are far more women than men enrolled in America's colleges. In 1997, women earned 25 percent more bachelor's degrees and 33 percent more master's degrees than men, and that gap widens every year. In general the women carry themselves with an appearance of ease that must have been matched only by that of the old WASP bluebloods when these schools were oriented around their desires. Twenty years ago, if memory serves, it was mostly us men who performed the role of seminar baboons—speaking up and showing off our knowledge, just as today it is mostly men who fill the op-ed pages with ideas and pontifications.

But in my discussions with student groups there were always several women who projected authority with a grace that was almost jaw-dropping. These women—who were born around 1982 remember—appeared uninhibited by any notion that they shouldn't assert themselves for fear of appearing unfeminine or that they should overexert themselves to prove their feminist bona fides. Those considerations appeared irrelevant to their lives. Of course everybody suffers from the normal insecurities. In conversation I learned that some of the women are more intimidated by their surroundings than they let on—like men. But in general, these women carry themselves with a wonderfully straightforward assurance, which suggests that despite all the madnesses and excesses of the feminists over the past few decades, we may have completed this social transformation pretty successfully.

The changing character of the women was bound to change courtship rituals. One night at dinner a student from the South mentioned that at her state university, where some of her friends go, they still have date nights on Friday nights. The men ask the women out and they go as couples. The other students at the dinner table were amazed. For many young people these days, the only time they've ever gone out on a formal date was their high school senior prom. You might as well have told them that in some parts of the country there are knights on horseback jousting with lances.

One of the young men at the dinner table piped up and said that his generation just happened to come along during a time of transition. A generation ago, there was one set of courtship rituals. Twenty years from now, he continued, there will be another. But now there are no set rules. There is ambiguity. Ambiguity and fluidity are indeed the key traits of the current social scene. A literature professor told me that he had come to notice a strange pattern among his students. Many of the 19th-century novels he teaches, he said, end with the heroine leaving her family and friends and going off to marry her one true love. Recently, he continued, he had found his students rebelling against that choice. To them, it didn't make sense to sacrifice your relationship with your friends to build a marriage relationship. After all, to them the friendship relationship is higher, more intimate, and more satisfying than the sexual or even romantic relationship. Friendships are forever, whereas just look at romances . . . they break apart. As one student put it, in a phrase I heard a few times, "Bro's before ho's."

Now it should be said that these students are idealizing friendships. Every longitudinal study of young people shows that Americans between 16 and 22 build and abandon intimate friendships with astounding speed. The people one is close to freshman year are probably not the people one is close to junior year. And yet it is that ideal—the happy, flexible clique with an undertone of sexual tension (just like on *Friends*)—that does seem to beckon as the preferred social bond. This is an amazing inversion of decades-old, if not centuries-old, social norms.

The literature professor continued that his students think they are making life easier for themselves by having these loose, informal bonds. After all, with these arrangements, the girl doesn't have to sit by the phone waiting to be asked out. There is no nervousness about when to start going steady. There are fewer traumatic breakup scenes. But on the other hand, the professor noted, nobody really knows where they stand. Relationships are just abandoned without any formal breakup, sometimes without a fight or even a word. I heard about a few relationships in which the guy thought he was going out with the girl, but the



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girl had an entirely different understanding of their relationship. The ambiguity allowed them to interpret their friendship (or love affair) in contradictory ways, with trouble looming down the road. The literature professor concluded that, on balance, the fluidity and ambiguity of the students' social lives leads to greater misery.

I've bounced his observations off many students, and some of them think he is overstating this. Many students are involved in long-term relationships. But fewer, I sense, than two decades ago. And it's undeniable that students do bring a prudential frame of mind to their romantic activities. College is a busy time. One has to take advantage of the unique opportunities. It's better, many of these students have reasoned, to put off serious relationships until one's career is established and you have time to invest in them.

When you put it this way, it sounds cold and calculating. In fact, these students are merely following the advice of their parents—the same people who would be quick to condemn them for taking the magic out of love. How many parents do you know—liberal or conservative, atheist or evangelical—who would enjoy seeing their child devote the bulk of his or her collegiate energies to a boyfriend or girlfriend, rather than to the vast array of activities and learning opportunities available at these $40,000-a-year schools? Very few. Parents who are ambitious for their kids imbue them with a professional, strategizing mindset. It's not surprising that they have carried this over—to some extent—into the arena of romance and sex.

**Nobody planned this achievement-enhancement system. It arose organically. It has millions of interlocking parts.**

One other quick observation about dating and romance. I was having lunch at a restaurant, and two female African-American law students were at the table next to me, talking loud enough that I could not help overhearing. (You call it snooping, I call it reporting.) They were complaining about how many of their male black law school friends would date white women. They ran down the list of their classmates, noting which ones would date whites with the same tone of contempt you might use to describe friends you thought would betray you to the secret police.

The overall tone of their conversation, such as I could hear it, was not merely segregationist. It was desperate. These were two extraordinarily attractive women. They were students at one of the world's best law schools. In theory they should have had to beat men off with sticks. And yet their general feeling was that the pool of available men for them was tiny and shrinking, that their prospects were truly grim. I mentioned this tale to a few black students at similar schools, and they all agreed that the conversation was utterly typical. Several noted that black men are more inclined than black women to date across racial lines, but nobody had a good explanation as to why this was so.

Let's move from sex to success. If affairs of the heart are influenced by time pressures and the desire to grasp opportunities, you can be assured that professional and career choices are too. Many of the students at these elite colleges are aware that they are the products of a certain sort of meritocratic system. Their lives have been formed by an intricate network of achievement-enhancement devices. As kids, they jumped through all the right hoops, as they often put it. They performed the requisite extracurricular activities, impressed teachers, and mastered the obstacle course of grades, standardized test scores, and mentor recommendations. Nobody planned this system. It arose organically. It has millions of interlocking parts—from animated public television programs teaching letter awareness or sermonizing about environmentalism, up through grade school teachers, SAT prep tutors, coaches, guidance counselors, parents, and friends. Each component in the system does its part to hone each child for growth, progress, learning, and ascent. Indeed, as I was teaching (this is the first time I've taught a course), I became aware how small a part each individual teacher plays in this vast achievement machine. The students, at least at these elite academies, have so many resources to draw on, so many experiences available to them, that the most an individual teacher can generally hope to do is to throw one more bucket of ideas into the ocean of their minds, and hope that somehow it makes a difference.

Many of the students are deeply ambivalent about the system and how it has shaped them. And they are right to be, because while the system produces lively and intelli-



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gent adults, it has a few serious drawbacks. On the positive side, the system does encourage students to exert themselves. Actually, it demands it. As one student at the Yale Political Union astutely noted, the system doesn't necessarily reward brains; it rewards energy. The ones who thrive are the ones who can keep going from one activity to another, from music, to science, to sports, to community service, to the library, and so on without rest. To get into a competitive school, you need a hyperactive thyroid as much as high intelligence.

Second, the system lovebombs the kids—at least the moderately successful ones—with encouragement. I was at a community college not long ago looking through some projects that students had done for a landscaping class. The students were asked to list their goals for the course. One wrote, "to become more comfortable, confident, and competent in my designs."

At elite schools, students are able to project that level of comfort, confidence, and competence. I asked a science professor who had moved to Yale how big the difference was between students at Yale and at the other competitive colleges where he had worked. The students at Yale are not that much smarter, he said. He's taught the same course at different schools, and the test results from school to school do not differ widely. But, he continued, most students at Yale, when they walk into a room, feel they can basically handle whatever situation they find there.

**The system doesn't necessarily reward brains; it rewards energy. To get into a competitive school, you need a hyperactive thyroid.**

These students have been instilled with a basic faith in themselves. They are thus remarkably eager to try new things, to thrust themselves into unlikely situations, to travel the world in search of new activities. At Dartmouth and Princeton, too, every other student you meet has just come back from some service adventure in remotest China or Brazil. During my conversations with them, I would sometimes realize with a start that they were two decades younger than me. With their worldliness, their sophisticated senses of humor, their ability to at least fake knowledge of a wide variety of fields, they socialize just like any group of fortysomethings.

They are also incredibly entrepreneurial when it comes to student activities. I've long regarded Yale as the best school in America, on the basis of conversations with adult friends who went there. It seems to have the best combination of small classes, a curious intellectual atmosphere, and a fun social scene. (I went to the University of Chicago, which had the first two, but not the last.) But even I was blown away by the richness of student life at Yale. There are periodicals, singing groups, secret societies, theater groups, community service groups, religious groups, debating societies, intramural teams, and so on everywhere you turn. Students start these things themselves. They run them themselves (and many of these groups are really small businesses). They build them bigger and bigger. Even if the Yale faculty disappeared tomorrow, the school would still be a fantastic place for students because of these activities.

Indeed, for many students, I suspect, these activities are the most important part of their college experience. It is through activities that students find the fields they enjoy and the talents they possess. The activities, rather than the courses, seem to serve as precursors to their future lives.

There is a dark side to the meritocratic system, however. One of the most destructive forces in American life today is the tyranny of the grade point average. Everyone argues about whether SATs are an unjust measure of student ability, but the GPA does far more harm. To get into top schools, students need to get straight A's or close. That means that students are not rewarded for developing a passion for a subject and following their curiosity wherever it takes them. They are rewarded if they can carefully budget their mental energies and demonstrate proficiency across all academic disciplines. They are rewarded, as Joseph Epstein put it, for their ability to take whatever their teachers throw out at them, in whatever field, and return it back in their warm little mouths. Idiosyncrasy is punished. Students are rewarded for having a lukewarm enthusiasm for all fields in general and none in particular. They are rewarded for mastering the method of being a good student, not for their passion for the content of any particular area of learning. They are rewarded for their ability to mindlessly defer to their professors' wishes, and never strike out on their own or follow a contradictory path.

This meritocratic system punishes eccentricity. As I



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went from campus to campus, meeting with, eating with, and drinking with groups of students, I found myself looking for and delighting in the students who stood out as bizarre or untamed. I came to cherish the left and right-wing radicals, the stubborn ROTC types, the caustic, comic lesbian jocks. One young woman came up to me at Dartmouth and called me a coward because I had been insufficiently scathing about her generation of college students in a piece I did for the *Atlantic Monthly* a couple of years ago. I practically wanted to hug her for being so refreshingly, and unusually, confrontational. That same evening I met a young man who told me he wanted to become president of the United States someday. Then he handed me his business card, which had his photo on it. That sounds kind of creepy, but this guy was so charming, so witty, and so unsystematic, he became one of the most memorable figures of my visit there. He had truly charted his own course.

Unfortunately, I also met some students who have simply accepted the system's definition of success. The system says that Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and a handful of other schools are the definition of success. And I found some students who attended these schools even though other schools, ones that came in lower on the *U.S. News and World Report* rankings, actually appealed to them more. I met students who felt compelled to do summer internships at investment banks and consulting groups because the system subtly encourages that kind of ascent-oriented summer job. These students knew that all spring people would be asking them how they were going to spend their summer. They didn't want to answer "Lifeguarding," because that would make them sound like a loser in the great climb up the ziggurat of success.

I met students who had a secret passion for philosophy, but who majored in economics under the mistaken impression that economics represents a higher step up the meritocratic ladder. I met students who applied for the special competitive programs, such as the Woodrow Wilson school at Princeton, not because they had any interest in the program's international affairs curriculum, but because if something is hard to get into, then it must be good, and therefore it is a prize they must grasp.

Most of all, I met students who had never really thought about how they wanted to spend their lives. They had never really used their imagination to create an ideal future. The system had encouraged them to get into an Ivy League school, and they had done that. Then the system encouraged them to get into a top law, medical, or business school, so they were headed for that. I met a student who took the LSATs, the MCATs, and the business school admissions tests. He figured he'd see what sort of test he did best in. Then he'd go into that line of work.

When you see students like this, you just want to despair. You begin to think that the true test of character is whether you find out what your calling is and pursue it even if it doesn't meet the world's criteria for maximum success. This sounds easy, but it's not. If your kid was accepted at Harvard, but you secretly thought he or she would be happier at Bennington, would you have the guts to turn Harvard down?

The second thing you think is that this vast meritocratic system has a huge hole at the end of it. Many of the students one meets graduate from these outstanding universities without any clear sense of what their life mission is. Moreover, they don't have any real idea of what is out there, of what real world career paths look like. If I were a magazine entrepreneur I would start a magazine called *CareerPaths*. Each issue would describe how various successful people got where they are.

Because many bright college students don't have a clue about the incredible variety of career paths that await them. They don't have the vaguest notion as to how real people move from post to post.

Some students believe that they face a sharp fork in the road. They can either sell their souls for money and work 80 hours a week at an investment bank, or they can live in spiritually satisfied poverty as an urban nursery school teacher. In reality, of course, the choices between wallet and soul are rarely that stark.

Other students operate under the assumption that there are only six professions in the world. There are doctors, lawyers, corporate executives, and so on. They haven't really been introduced to the massive array of unusual jobs that actually exist. As a result they fall into the familiar ruts.

In a weird way, the meritocratic system is both too professional and not career-oriented enough. It encourages prudential thinking, and a professional mindset in areas where serendipity and curiosity should rule, but it does not really give students, even the brilliant students at top schools, an accurate picture of the real world of work. These young people are tested and honed from birth, from when they get their Apgar score until graduation, when they get their honors degree. Then the system spits them out into the world when they are in their twenties, and suddenly there is nothing—just a few desperate years as they search for some satisfying spot in the universe.

One final point about colleges and politics. When one reads about America's colleges in the media, especially in the conservative media, one gets the impression that the top universities are left-wing hothouses, filled with multicultural radicalism and fevered



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anti-American passions. That's not true. Most professors are liberals, and it's true that in its wisdom American society has decided to warehouse its radical lunatics on university campuses—in specialized departments that operate as nunneries for the perpetually alienated. But most students at these places do not live in an overly politicized world.

There is, one must always remember, a large cultural gap between the students and the faculty. I met few students—alarmingly few students—who seriously contemplated a career in the academy. They thought of becoming high school teachers or reporters or even soldiers. Academia just never came up. And if you focused their attention on the professorial life, they would talk about what they saw as the pedantic specialization of academic research, the jargon and the impenetrable prose, the professors' cloistered remove from the real world. Academia seems stale to many of them, not a place that allows for exciting inquiry.

There is also a political gap between students and their professors. The professoriate, on balance, is well to the left of the students, and the students, aware of this gap, simply accept it as part of the inevitable structure of the universe. Students know who the radical professors are (they are a loud but small minority on each campus). On the whole, the students are condescending toward them.

**The left-wing radicalism of some professors is regarded as a blemish, a sign of infantile withdrawal from reality.**

A radical professor can be a good or even a great professor, most students would agree. But his or her left-wing views are regarded as a blemish, the way a professor's absent-mindedness would have been in an earlier generation. Left-wing radicalism, the students tend to perceive, is something that can only survive in the protected world of academia. It is seen by many as a sign of infantile withdrawal from reality.

As to their own views, I would say the center of political gravity I encountered is somewhere slightly to the right of the *New York Times*. The students are liberal, but not excessively so. That's only natural because most of the students I met at elite schools are from upper-middle-class suburbs or cities on the East and West coasts. When I gave talks on these campuses, I'd generally ask students to raise their hand if they came from states George Bush carried in 2000. Generally a fifth or a quarter or a third of the students are from red states. There are many more students from suburban New Jersey or Maryland or Northern California. Their politics are pretty representative of the politics you would find among adults in those areas.

I did run across many conservative students, who don't seem to feel fundamentally alienated from their peers. I'm happy to report that many of the smarter students one meets have some conservative opinions, especially about the venality of the United Nations and such things. You would not call them movement conservatives, however, and many said they are privately embarrassed by confrontational conservatives such as David Horowitz and publications like the *Dartmouth Review*.

I'm not going to close with any grand summation about the moral and intellectual health of America's student generation. What I will say is that today's students are a lot of fun to be around. When I signed up to teach at Yale, I figured I'd try to meet some members of the Yale faculty while I was up there and taste the intellectual life. But then I started having lunches and dinners with groups of students (my interactions with students in class are off the record), and I found them so completely engaging I never got around to meeting these scholars. At Kenyon, an enormously appealing place, I found myself at the one campus bar, amidst students who actually talked philosophy over beers. Then I met some of the members of the Kenyon football team. The team, which has a grand total of 29 players, is among the worst in the country. This year they lost every game but one. They even lost to Oberlin, not exactly a football powerhouse. One opponent, I was told, started kicking field goals on second down to avoid running up the score with more touchdowns. And yet these Kenyon guys practiced as hard as any team, cared about winning as much as any set of players, and endured teasing that was painful to them. By 1 A.M., they were drunk and getting gooey about their friendships—hugging and slobbering over each other. I'm sure they are learning important things from their professors, but even if they aren't, they are getting their money's worth out of their college experience. ♦



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# Who Is Prince Nayef?

*The most powerful man in Saudi Arabia*

**By Bill Tierney**

In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the trappings of monarchy obscure the police state that keeps the Saud family in power. But beneath the veneer of gracious luxury, internal security has never been more important than it is today to a regime that constrains the press and commerce, struggles to provide the generous benefits promised its citizens, and has made the country a breeding ground for Islamic extremism. Enmeshed as we are in an alliance of necessity with the Saudis, Americans should be asking: Who runs Saudi internal security? What are his views about the United States and about jihad? And how much power does he wield in the Saudi power structure?

The man who has been in charge of the Ministry of Interior for the last 27 years is Prince Nayef bin Abdul-Aziz, technically the fourth most powerful man in Saudi Arabia. Active and alert at 69—unlike the two leading members of the "Sudeiri Seven," King Fahd and Prince Sultan, both of whom are elderly and ailing—Nayef has far more sway than the Western press has generally recognized. He heads five major oversight committees and imposes himself on four other ministers, while firmly holding the reins of the most powerful ministry in the kingdom.

Indeed, Nayef appears to have made himself irremovable. Certainly he is in a position to remind his brothers, Prince Sultan and Crown Prince Abdullah, that regardless of who makes the public statements or takes the diplomatic trips, it is he who maintains the stability of the kingdom, and his organization that, day by day, keeps the royal family in power. The keys are in his hands, and there is no one who can hold him to account.

The reach of Nayef's influence is truly remarkable. Although there is a ministry devoted to the hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca required of Muslims, for example, Prince Nayef chairs the Supreme Committee on the Hajj; he is the man behind the mike with assurances that everything will run smoothly, an excellent way to burnish his Islamic credentials. The minister of the hajj, Dr. Iyad bin Ameen Madani, has been in the job only since 1999 and would of course defer to the senior minister.

Entry into the World Trade Organization is a major topic in Saudi Arabia lately, and one would expect the minister of commerce, Osama bin Jafar bin Ibrahim Faqih, or the foreign minister, Prince Saud, to be intimately involved. But it is Prince Nayef, head of the Ministerial Oversight Committee on the WTO, who calls the shots and calls the press conferences. Nayef also heads the ambiguously titled Ministerial Committee on Morality (or "Morale"). While Saudi newspapers never explain the function of this committee other than to produce studies on accession to the WTO, they do report some of its meetings. Such a meeting in June 2001, according to the Riyadh newspaper *Al-jazirah*, was attended by the foreign minister, but took place in the interior minister's office.

Prince Nayef likes to give the younger Prince Saud a hand with foreign policy. It was Nayef, not Saud, who went to Iran for the groundbreaking meeting to renew relations with the revolutionary regime in April 2001. Nayef regularly travels to Yemen for talks that should be the purview of the foreign minister. He threatened to start two human rights committees in response to criticism from Amnesty International. His comments in October 2001 about civilian deaths from U.S. bombing in Afghanistan caused a diplomatic flurry, which he then topped by saying Saudi Arabia would not support a U.S. invasion of Iraq. The poor foreign minister was left grinning and trying to say something important.

Similarly, it is the job of the information minister to control the content of all media in the Kingdom. Since 1995, the position has been held by Dr. Fouad bin Abdul Salaam bin Muhammad Al Farsi—but Prince Nayef

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heads the Supreme Council on Information. He is a major player in the Saudi media labyrinth.

The involvement of the senior members of the royal family in the Saudi media is far too byzantine to elucidate here. Suffice it to say that the dearth of substantive information on the workings of government in the Saudi press leaves observers scrutinizing every phrase for hidden meanings—as when Prince Salman, governor of Riyadh, returned from overseas and Prince Nayef pointedly was not among those attending the welcome-home reception. Nayef's usual response to negative coverage of Saudi Arabia in the world media is one that draws militants into his camp: He blames the Western conspiracy to hurt Islam and the kingdom. On this issue, Saudi reporters take dictation from the prince. A choice example from the English language *Riyadh Daily* of October 23, 2001:

> Whether it is the efficacy of the Jewish lobby or plain misconception, the Western media seem to be running amuck with reports against the Kingdom and its way of life. On Saturday, Interior Minister Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz strongly criticized this trend and affirmed that such campaigns will not have any effect on the Kingdom itself. Prince Nayef's rejoinder to the Western campaign was most timely and may have put to rest whatever doubt one may have on the Kingdom's integrity.

*Prince Nayef knows that the widespread sympathy in Saudi Arabia for Osama bin Laden is a response not to bin Laden's personal charisma but to his jihadist mission, framed as obedience to the true Islam.*

Lately, following the revelation that a member of the royal family had indirectly funded a 9/11 hijacker, Prince Nayef has resurrected the view that the Jews were behind the attacks. An article in the English edition of the Saudi newsweekly *Ain Al-Yaqeen* of November 29, 2002, states:

> Prince Nayef bin Abdul Aziz said that he greatly suspected that these terrorist organizations have relation with foreign intelligence that worked against Arab and Muslims, topped by Israeli intelligence. They wanted to attack us at our bases and tenets, notably our religion and the Palestinian issue.
>
> He noted that it is impossible that 19 youths including 17 Saudis carried out the operation of September 11, or that bin Laden or Al-Qaeda organization did that alone. We can say that these people are either agents or ignorant since their action was against Islam and Muslims. By this action the world became against Islam, Muslims and Arabs.

It is not a towering or trained intellect that propels Prince Nayef to propound these positions. His bio mentions his "studies in religion, diplomacy, and security affairs." In fact, his lack of education is one of his greatest credentials. The ministers of commerce, information, and foreign affairs all studied in the United States. From an Islamist point of view, they're tainted.

What Prince Nayef does have, thanks to his perch as interior minister, is a better feel for the mood of the populace than anyone else in the kingdom. He sees the Islamist storm brewing and is trying to co-opt its energy to keep the House of Saud, or at least himself, in power. Thus, among his concerns as minister of the interior is the possibility that members of his own security personnel will join the jihad and direct it against the House of Saud, deeming their rule illegitimate on Islamic grounds.

Nayef is keenly aware that the widespread sympathy in Saudi Arabia for Osama bin Laden is a response not to bin Laden's personal charisma but to his jihadist mission, explicitly framed as obedience to the true Islam. It is a danger inadvertently sown by the regime itself, which long ago instituted the incessant intoning of the Koran on state radio and television. Prince Nayef, it seems, has decided to deal with this threat by riding the jihadist wave.

His monetary support for the Palestinians has been high-profile. He was the organizer of the famous telethon to raise money for Palestine in April 2002, and the website of his Saudi Committee for Support of the Al-Quds Intifada carries exhaustive reports on Saudi financial and media support for the Palestinians. Nayef is also general supervisor of the Joint Saudi Committee for the Relief of Kosovo and Chechnya, which funds Muslim activities and conducts training courses in these two countries. This is precisely the kind of relief organization that is routinely used by jihadists as a cover for their activities. Many of the jihadist Arabs in Taliban-run Afghanistan had previously fought in Chechnya.

As interior minister, Prince Nayef is responsible for controlling the clergy within the kingdom. Although he has had the occasional extremist cleric arrested, he stands aside while many others preach jihad. One exam-



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ple from a long list is Ibn Jebreen, a respected sheikh from the Najd region, the heartland of Wahhabism. He emphatically preaches jihad, notably in support of the Muslim brothers in Chechnya. By his logic, anytime Muslims are under attack, it is incumbent on other Muslims to go to their aid. Given that a majority of Saudis cheered the 9/11 attacks, we can expect to see tens of thousands of Saudis head north to help their fellow Muslims when Iraq is attacked. As the ultimate boss of the Border Guards, Prince Nayef will be fully informed.

Further evidence of Prince Nayef's riding the jihadist wave is the case of Sheikh Salman bin Fahd Al-Oadah. Arrested by the Interior Ministry in 1994 for his radical preaching, Al-Oadah was released in 1999 without cause or comment. Since then, he has launched a website, *Islamtoday.net*, from his home in Buraydah, in the Najd. The English version of this site contains a straightforward definition of jihad:

> The general meaning of jihad is the expenditure of effort in order to establish Allah's religion, call people to it, and establish its authority on the Earth, as well as reform the material circumstances of humanity. . . . The specific meaning of jihad is the military engagement of the unbelievers and those who carry the same legal status as the unbelievers. Jihad, by this meaning, becomes obligatory upon the inhabitants of the countries that come under the occupation of the unbelievers.

Today, Al-Oadah enjoys the protection of Prince Nayef's ministry.

Nor can such individuals be dismissed as fringe elements, the Saudi equivalent, say, of the Branch Davidians. When the Palestinians' Al-Aqsa Intifada began in the fall of 2000, senior members of the Saudi Ministry of Defense living in an upscale naval housing complex south of Riyadh heard their imam exhorting them as dutiful Muslims to fight Israel and those who support Israel. No wonder the Saudis hired a PR consultant to hit the Washington talk show circuit and discredit anyone who accuses them of being two-faced.

Some insist that the Saudis are with us behind closed doors, and serve up the standard verbiage purely for popular consumption. If this were so, it would follow that they would rein in the preachers who inspired the 9/11 attackers and the numerous other Saudis who joined forces with bin Laden. A review of the Saudi press and Islamic websites shows that the opposite is true.

After September 11, American strategists considered some worrisome long-term scenarios, including changes of government in Egypt, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. Such change may already be underway in Saudi Arabia, where Prince Nayef is taking over before our eyes, retaining heir apparent Abdullah as window dressing.

Most discussions of the succession to King Fahd emphasize the competition be.2tween Crown Prince Abdullah, head of the National Guard, and Prince Sultan, head of the Ministry of Defense. These two factions would be major players if civil war broke out. But Prince Nayef already has his troops in place and hard at work. Less clear is whether his agents have infiltrated the other two organizations and have the authority to arrest "disloyal elements."

Prince Nayef

Illustration by Earl Keleny

When the United States finally starts calling this war what it is—a war against jihadist Islam—then clarity will dispel the illusion that our relationship with the Saudis can ever go back to what it was before September 11. The Saudis claim they are combating terrorism. Can they also say they are combating jihad?

In this country, there are some old-school types who cling to their settled view of the Middle East; the academic community (with rare exceptions) is still sinking in the tar pit of postmodernism. But the Saudis have chosen their course, a path they presumably see as consistent with the dictates of the Koran. They will continue to play us for fools as long as they can. It is high time we stopped cooperating. We could begin by taking the measure of the man behind the throne. ◆



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# The Vatican Has Her Back to the Wall

So said a leading French cardinal in a public attack on a high-ranking cardinal in the Roman Curia. Because of that, said the French cardinal, certain decisions "cannot suffer further delay" and must be made "promptly." What decisions? The French cardinal cited certain "disciplinary and doctrinal knots" — e.g., sexuality, marriage, and the role of women in the Church.

Now, it's our understanding that decisions about those matters were authoritatively made long ago by the Church, and that there are no "knots" here — certainly no *doctrinal* knots — that need untying.

The French cardinal continued: "The times we live in are marked by a profound evolution of the moral...conscience. Couldn't this evolution bring us [in the Church] something new...something that would present itself in a 'rationality' other than that of antiquity and of the Middle Ages?... Should we not further expose some of our concepts and practices to the challenge of the rationality and the sensitivities of today...?"

For those of us familiar with the code language of cardinals, it's clear that the French cardinal was saying that the Church is stuck in antiquity and the Middle Ages, and needs to appease the Spirit of the Times by overhauling her teachings.

The mindset of that French cardinal is typical of the large "progressive" (or accommodationist) bloc in the Church. And he made bold to say, "Those in charge [in the Vatican] have their backs to the wall."

And maybe he's right. *But so what?* St. Athanasius had his back to the wall. So did St. Thomas More. And so did Winston Churchill at the beginning of World War II. None of them capitulated.

Yes, Rome *does* have her back to the wall, but in no small measure because many prelates have refused to defend papal teaching, have chosen to play the role of Neville Chamberlain or Marshal Pétain in today's Church.

Today we need prelates, priests, and laymen with Churchillian spirit. A mere 18 days before the fall of France, Churchill said that even if all the Continent should fall to the Axis powers, "We shall not flag or fail.... We shall fight in the seas and oceans...we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing-grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender...."

The struggle ahead will be difficult. We know that many loyal Catholics feel beset on all sides — outmanned, outgunned, isolated. That too was Britain's plight. She stood alone. But she did not flinch — and she prevailed.

St. Paul urges us to "fight the good fight" (1Tim. 6:12). And so, to paraphrase Churchill on the day after the fall of France, let us orthodox Catholics brace ourselves against those who collaborate with the *Zeitgeist* and let us so steel ourselves for victory that even a thousand years from now men will say, *This was their finest hour.*

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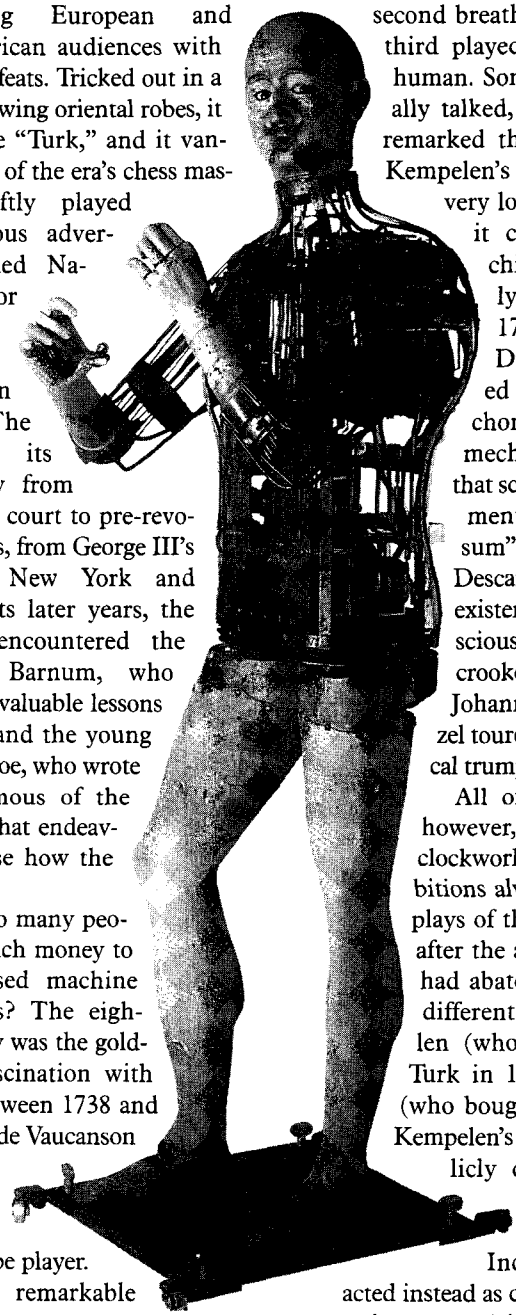
# The Dream of Mechanical Life

BY HUGH ORMSBY-LENNON

From 1770 to 1838, a mysterious automaton astounded well-paying European and American audiences with chess-playing feats. Tricked out in a turban and flowing oriental robes, it was called the "Turk," and it vanquished many of the era's chess masters in swiftly played games. Famous adversaries included Napoleon (a poor player and a sore loser) and Benjamin Franklin. The Turk made its lucrative way from the Hapsburg court to pre-revolutionary Paris, from George III's London to New York and Havana. In its later years, the Turk even encountered the young P.T. Barnum, who learned some valuable lessons in publicity, and the young Edgar Allan Poe, who wrote the most famous of the many essays that endeavored to expose how the hoax worked.



Why did so many people pay so much money to see a supposed machine playing chess? The eighteenth century was the golden age of fascination with automata. Between 1738 and 1741, Jacques de Vaucanson thrilled Paris with a clockwork duck, flutist, and pipe player. These were remarkable contraptions. The first seemed genuinely to excrete after being fed, while the second breathed faster and the third played faster than any human. Some automata actually talked, although Goethe remarked that Wolfgang von Kempelen's robot was "not very loquacious," even if it could "pronounce childish words nicely." During the 1770s the Jacquet-Droz family exhibited a lady harpsichordist and two mechanoid toddlers that scribbled such sentiments as "cogito ergo sum"—a nice play on Descartes's proof for the existence of human consciousness. A clever but crooked engineer named Johann Nepomuk Maelzel toured with a mechanical trumpeter.

All of these creations, however, were evidently clockwork—and their exhibitions always included displays of the robotic innards after the audience's wonder had abated. The Turk was different. Neither Kempelen (who constructed the Turk in 1770) nor Maelzel (who bought the Turk from Kempelen's son in 1804) publicly demonstrated the full inner workings of the Turk. Indeed the two men acted instead as consummate showmen when supervising the Turk—preferring to let audiences imagine that their prodigy had outstripped the powers of human cognition embodied in those he played against.

There is no doubt that the Turk was a hoax, although collectors of eighteenth-century clockwork (and scholars of Poe) still argue about just how a human could fit inside the figure to manipulate its mechanical limbs. But the Turk's popularity derived from its challenge to the widespread belief that the human intellect could not be simulated by a machine, particularly in a game whose complexity seemed to exceed the prescient craft of any toy designer. For Garry Kasparov, the Russian chess master who lost to IBM's computer Deep Blue in 1997, some of the same challenges were on the line. In *Behind Deep Blue: Building the Computer that Defeated the World Chess Champion*, Feng-Hsiung Hsu insists the computerized victory represents "the achievement of the holy grail" to which machine builders had aspired since Kempelen.

*Behind Deep Blue* is, alas, a dull book in which the Taiwanese leader of the team that devised the winning program describes his quest in mind-numbing, narcissistic detail. The truth is that Kasparov's defeat proved little more than a seven-day wonder. Nowadays almost everyone accepts that a computer programmed to win at chess poses no more threat to human intellect than a pocket calculator: Witness the extraordinary lack of public interest in this fall's million-dollar match between the world champion Vladimir Kramnik and the most highly rated chess computer, Deep Fritz 7, which ended in a 4 to 4 tie on October 19.

Matters were different in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. With his definition of the *cogito*, Descartes had proved to many seventeenth-century savants that thinking is the essence of what it means to be human. The human being as a "thinking thing" stands distinct from the "mechanical matter" that constitutes everything else in the world. Even animals, lacking the capacity to think the *cogito*, must be merely machine-like material beings.

In 1747 Julien Offray de la Mettrie, an atheistical follower of Descartes,

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took the next step and openly proposed the "man-machine": Men and their brains comprised no more than a highly complex system of biological cogs and wheels and camshafts. When the Turk appeared in 1770, commentators agonized over its mechanistic challenge to a god-given *cogito*, whether construed as soul or mind. Mightn't the Turk, indeed, prove La Mettrie's premise?

And yet, most of those who emptied their pockets in order to watch robotic chess were there for the best show in town. Skeptics in those days—like skeptics in our own—mocked the charlatans (and their gulls) whose swindles made nonsense of claims about "The Enlightenment" and "The Age of Reason." But it was an era when even serious science—air-pumps, Franklin's electrical gizmos, chemical experiments—was often presented as a carnival show or parlor game.

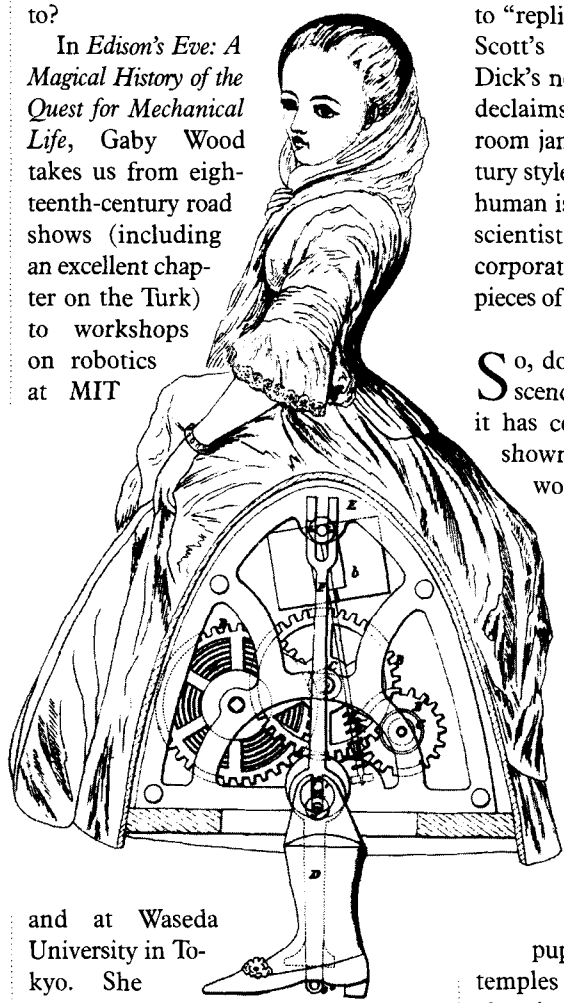
The sheer mileage of the Turk's career suggests there was more to him than met religious, skeptical, and scientifically curious eyes. In his essay on "The Uncanny," Sigmund Freud dwells on the psychological disturbance provoked by automata, dolls, and puppets. Buried in the usual psychiatric mumbo jumbo are Freud's typically brilliant insights, here into our love-hate relations with such figures. Almost lifelike, these uncanny doppelgängers challenge our humanity, but we are often driven, particularly as children, to own or to watch them. Are we still, in our adult nightmares, no more than mechanical puppets who can be dismembered? Can puppets or dolls come alive to threaten or kill us?

If the Turk lacked the ferocity of the Punch and Judy show—also in its heyday during the eighteenth century—it spoke to more intellectual fears about human identity and its loss. Most clockwork automata were scarily hyperactive. On suspicion of demonic possession, the Spanish Inquisition briefly imprisoned Pierre Jacquet-Droz and one of the family's mechanoid toddlers.

By contrast, the impassive Turk was eerily ratiocinative, limiting itself to the single sound of "check" (in whatever language was demanded by the countries where he played). Of all automata the Turk was the uncanniest.

A spate of new books addresses eighteenth-century automata, ventriloquists' dummies, and puppets—together with more recent avatars of chess computers, artificial intelligence, androids, robots, and cyborgs. Does "computerization" challenge human identity as ominously as "mechanization" previously seemed to?

In *Edison's Eve: A Magical History of the Quest for Mechanical Life*, Gaby Wood takes us from eighteenth-century road shows (including an excellent chapter on the Turk) to workshops on robotics at MIT and at Waseda University in Tokyo. She invokes Freud's notion of the Uncanny and, for good measure, throws in chapters on Edison's invention of a speaking doll that he was unable to market, the magical films of the innovative French movie director Georges Méliès (who ended his life selling cheap toys in a Paris railway station), and a mini-history of the Dolls, a family of German midgets who performed at Coney Island and whose last surviving member she tracks down in Sarasota.



Wood points out that the word "android" was actually coined during the eighteenth century. Philip K. Dick's usage of it in his classic sci-fi novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) will probably be more familiar. And "Rick Deckard," the name of the novel's hero, will also remind sharp-eared readers of "René Descartes." Within a few years of Dick's resurrection of "android," however, the word had become so familiar that it was changed to "replicant" in *Blade Runner*, Ridley Scott's 1982 cult movie version of Dick's novel. One replicant in the film declaims "Cogito ergo sum" amidst a room jam-packed with eighteenth-century style automata. "More human than human is our motto," explains the mad scientist who runs the interplanetary corporation designing these masterpieces of artificial intelligence.

So, does artificial intelligence transcend Freudian nightmare now that it has come to suggest not itinerant showmen or tinkerers with clockwork but university scientists, computer moguls, and global corporations? Or does a scientist with an uncanny puppet always remain mad or charlatanical? According to Victoria Nelson in her goofy *The Secret Life of Puppets*, the turn of our new millennium has witnessed the wonderful reemergence of a "sub-zeitgeist." Nelson reminds us that "rotating statues, singing mechanical birds, and automated miniature puppet theaters" enlivened pagan temples and even some Christian churches. In the fourth century A.D., esoteric philosophers struck an ideal balance of "divinized humanity"—Nelson's original "sub-zeitgeist"—among people, statues, and the world. Organized religion and the mechanization of the world picture took their toll, but modern technology now promises a New Age return to ancient wisdom. Nelson enjoys making an autodidact's case not only from arcane lore but from movies like *The Truman Show* and *The Matrix*.



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What Nelson's "secret life of puppets" entails will escape most readers—including this one—but our own era certainly seems eager to make the kind of connections that Wood limns between the handiwork of eighteenth-century mechanicians and the android simulacra that twenty-first-century proponents of artificial intelligence have unleashed. A learned and gorgeously illustrated anthology of the many permutations of these themes may be found in Barbara Maria Stafford and Frances Terpak's *Devices of Wonder: From the World in a Box to Images on a Screen*.

The flow of books on this and related topics seems almost endless. In 2000, the photographer Peter Menzel and the journalist Faith D'Aluisio put together a volume called *Robo Sapiens: Evolution of a New Species*, a sort of *Life* magazine tour of recent attempts at robots, cyborgs, and artificial intelligence. Now Joanna Zyminska gathers academic essays for *The Cyborg Experiments: The Extensions of the Body in the Media Age*. In *Flesh and Machines: How Robots Will Change Us*, Rodney Brooks, the director of the Artificial Intelligence Laboratory at MIT, dashes from Vaucanson's eighteenth-century Parisian duck to "Kismet," his own computerized mechanical head—with "large blue eyeballs, eyelids made of silver foil, bits of carpet for brows, twists of pink paper for ears, and red rubber tubing to make a mouth"—that is, Brooks claims, the word's first "sociable" robot, interacting "with people on an equal basis." (Both Brooks and his "cartoonish, mechanical gremlin" are discussed by Gaby Wood in the introduction to *Edison's Eve*.) Meanwhile in *Building Bots*, William Gurstelle gives instructions on how to build your own little fighter in the garage for "combat robotics."

The peak of all this may be the moment at which the inventor Ray Kurzweil asks, "As Machines become more like People, will People become more like God?" The infectiously enthusiastic Kurzweil is the leading proponent of "Strong A.I.," a brave new world in which a "Non-invasive Surgery-Free Reversible Programmable Distributed Brain Implant" will soon become available. In the keynote essay in *Are We Spiritual Machines?* Kurzweil imagines nanobots—hyper-intelligent miniaturized robots—zipping around our brains and downloading our mental software onto new hard drives which will somehow become re-embodied as us. Immortality looms, if "we are sufficiently careful to make frequent backups." Kurzweil microwaves Victoria Nelson's New Age slop about "divinized humanity."

It's certainly true that people are increasingly becoming cyborgs—part man, part machine—as they acquire artificial hips, pacemakers, and even computer chips in the brain. And in *I, Cyborg*, Kevin Warwick issues a wacky manifesto for those who aspire to become A.I. machines. But *Are We Spiritual Machines?* matches Kurzweil against various critics, from thoughtful anti-Darwinists to leading materialist philosophers such as John Searle—all of whom agree that "Strong A.I." is a chimera. There's something that feels slightly dated—1950s science-fictiony, like Isaac Asimov's *I, Robot*—about the dream of computers coming alive. Certainly much more immediately pressing concerns seem to be coming out of cloning and other parts of the Brave New World of eugenic biotechnology. In such books as *Disclosure*, *Rising Sun*, and *Jurassic Park*, the enormously popular fiction writer Michael Crichton has always been a remarkable predictor of the next topic around which public fears will crystallize, but his latest thriller, *Prey*, which constructs a nightmare out of nanotechnology, seems to have missed the public mood and is not doing as well as Crichton novels are expected to do.

Still, the Enlightenment fascination with automata survives. In *The Turk: The Life and Times of the Famous Eighteenth-Century Chess-Playing Machine*, Tom Standage proffers the unvarnished history of an earlier era's most famous android. The Turk was built in 1770 for Maria Theresa, Empress of Austria, after Kempelen had been irritated at court by the self-congratulations of a visiting French conjuror. Kempelen also designed waterworks and mining pumps as well as a typewriter for the blind and a machine for simulating the human voice. The

**Flesh and Machines**
*How Robots Will Change Us*
by Rodney A. Brooks
Parthenon, 260 pp., $26

**Prey**
*A Novel*
by Michael Crichton
HarperCollins, 384 pp., $26.95

**Dumbstruck**
*A Cultural History of Ventriloquism*
by Steven Connor
Oxford University Press, 448 pp., $35

**Building Bots**
*Designing and Building Warrior Robots*
by William Gurstelle
Chicago Review Press, 256 pp., $19.95

**Behind Deep Blue**
*Building the Computer that Defeated the World Chess Champion*
by Feng-Hsiung Hsu
Princeton University Press, 298 pp., $27.95

**Are We Spiritual Machines?**
*Ray Kurzweil vs. the Critics of Strong A.I.*
by Ray Kurzweil et al.
Discovery Institute, 228 pp., $14.95

**Robo Sapiens**
*Evolution of a New Species*
by Peter Menzel and Faith D'Aluisio
MIT Press, 240 pp., $29.95

**The Secret Life of Puppets**
by Victoria Nelson
Harvard University Press, 350 pp., $29.95

**Devices of Wonder**
*From the World in a Box to Images on a Screen*
by Barbara Maria Stafford and Frances Terpak,
Getty, 416 pp., $39.95

**The Turk**
*The Life and Times of the Famous Eighteenth-Century Chess-Playing Machine*
by Tom Standage
Walker & Co., 224 pp., $24

**I, Cyborg**
by Kevin Warwick
Century, 318 pp., £16.99

**Edison's Eve**
*A Magical History of the Quest for Mechanical Life*
by Gaby Wood
Knopf, 304 pp., $24

**The Cyborg Experiments**
*The Extensions of the Body in the Media Age*
edited by Joanna Zyminska
Continuum, 256 pp., $29.95



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Walker. Previous pictures: Clockwork Clarinetist (1838), Getty; Walking Doll (1862), Knopf.

*A proposed solution to the mystery of the Turk, from 1789.*

Turk's next owner, Maelzel, designed automata, human prostheses, and a gigantic music box called the Panharmonicon. Purveyor of ear-trumpets to Beethoven, Maelzel unsuccessfully negotiated to have the composer's "Wellington's Victory" performed on the Panharmonicon. With the Turk as centerpiece of an elaborate roadshow, however, Maelzel achieved international fame.

The Turk made both Kempelen and Maelzel rich, but Maelzel (who passed off the android as his own invention) ended up fleeing Europe. Among the lawsuits he left behind was one from Napoleon's family, which had bought the Turk from him and unwisely lent it back. The Turk's transatlantic prestige waned—if not so quickly as Deep Blue's—when its uniqueness was challenged by rival automata like the American Chess Player and the Automatic Whist Player.

After Maelzel died destitute in 1838, the Turk was found dispersed among crates in Philadelphia. Purchased and rebuilt by a local physician, the automaton was donated to the museum of Charles Willson Peale—the great American portrait painter who also ran an upmarket freak show—where the Turk was eventually destroyed by a fire that engulfed the establishment. In fact, few eighteenth-century automata have survived intact. Today, only the mechanoid toddlers of the Jacquet-Droz family perform on Cartesian cue in Switzerland, the country that invented the cuckoo clock. *Cuckoo ergo sum.*

Standage tries to stick to the facts about the Turk (which are fantastical enough), but he also has to cope with the mythology that quickly accrued around the robot, not least the fictitious games against Frederick the Great and Catherine the Great. Such melodrama, Standage recognizes, boosted the Turk's notoriety and thus comprised a legitimate (if untrue) part of its career. Cleverly, Standage postpones an explanation of the hoax until well into his short but absorbing book.

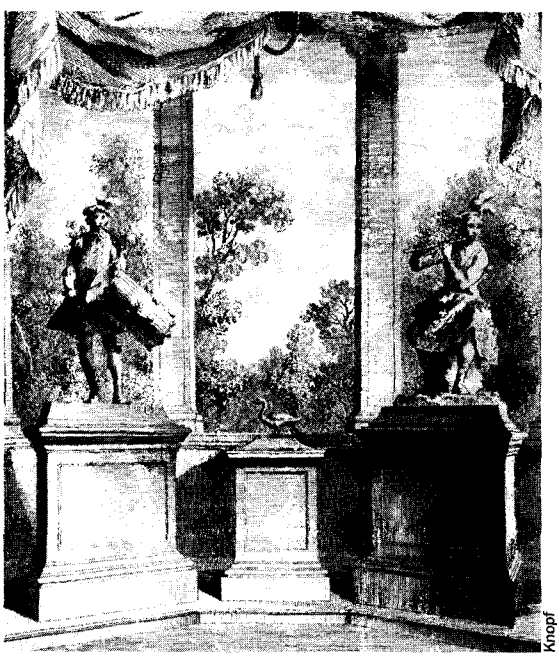
From its first appearances on the public stage, the Turk provoked suspicion. Skeptics could understand the principles of clockwork automata but could not accept the Turk's primitive simulation of intelligence. Did its owners control its moves with puppet wires or magnets?

Most serious commentators, however, agreed that the Turk was controlled from inside the box on which he played. Because of the box's limited dimensions, a monkey, dwarf, child, or legless man were proposed as the Turk's animators. In fact, the cleverly constructed box concealed a full-sized human who was often a chess master.

The best explanation was printed in 1821 by Robert Willis, grandson of George III's most famous "mad-doctor" and future professor of applied mechanics at Cambridge. Surreptitiously, the nineteen-year-old Willis measured the box with his umbrella during one of the Turk's exhibition games in London and then made the requisite calculations. With some refinements, Standage endorses Willis's commentary (and engravings), which he judges superior to Poe's 1836 "Maelzel's Chess Player."

Inside the box Kempelen had constructed a compartment to hide a human chess player while the showman opened doors to dupe audiences with glimpses of phony, fold-up mechanical paraphernalia. Casters allowed the showman to swivel the box convincingly. Only the sepulchral voice and the pantography that allowed the operator control of the Turk's playing arm were genuine clockwork. A system of magnetic devices under the chessboard allowed the operator to follow play, which he (or occasionally she) replicated underneath on a miniature board illuminated by a candle. A candelabrum resting on the box concealed the smell of burning wax within. Sneezes or coughs could be drowned out by the showman's fiddling with levers connected to fake internal machinery. Games were played fast to ease the operator's cramped position.

The most remarkable fact about the Turk's career is that Kempelen and Maelzel each orchestrated, on two con-



Knopf

*Vaucanson's automata in 1739: drummer, duck, and flutist.*



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tinents, a successful conspiracy of superb players, journalists, and even a Columbia University professor, all of whom took turns in the android's cramped box. Only in 1834 did Jacques-François Mouret, an alcoholic chess master, squeal to a Parisian tabloid for the price of a drink. News crossed the Atlantic, and after Maelzel's death a version of Mouret's confessions in the *National Gazette* was found among his effects. By then, it was yesterday's news.

"However great and surprising the powers of mechanism may be," declared Robert Willis in his exposé of the Turk, "the movements which spring from it are necessarily limited and uniform. It cannot usurp and exercise the faculties of mind." The computer revolution and Deep Blue have redrawn our notion of "the powers of mechanism," although we are still debating the faculties of mind (or brain). Standage contrasts the swindle of a human chess player inside a box with the beginnings of machine intelligence in Charles Babbage's early nineteenth-century designs for an "Analytical Engine" and with its triumph in Deep Blue. He also notes how Vaucanson switched his attention from clockwork automata to the use of cards in order to program weaving looms. Behind the eighteenth and early nineteenth century's fascination with automata, Standage discerns the makings not only of the industrial revolution but also of information technology.

Getty

*A writing hand, clockwork from 1764.*

In *Edison's Eve*, Gaby Wood begins her discussion of Descartes by repeating the famous anecdote about the life-size clockwork puppet that the Frenchman made of his dead daughter Francine. This deluxe humanoid was discovered, during a storm, by sailors on the ship that was carrying the philosopher to his new job (and final resting place) with Queen Christina of Sweden. Over the side went the ghostly machine, and the ship was saved from the storm that Francine's black magic had provoked.

The problem with this anecdote is that it is completely untrue. Wood fails to emphasize that innovative scientists from Pythagoras to Edward Teller have frequently attracted whiffs of Dr. Frankenstein. The myth of Francine shows how something uncanny swirled even around the reputation of Descartes, the arch-rationalist.

In *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism*, Steven Connor tackles a seemingly limited topic, but he incisively transforms it into a meditation on what it means to be human, ranging from Delphi and the Witch of Endor through early modern witch-hunts and Kempelen's talking automaton, and down to Edgar Bergen and Charlie MacCarthy. Connor recalls how, in 1995, a toddler was butchered by two ten-year-olds in Liverpool. As consumers of "video nasties" like *Child's Play*, the lads imagined they were killing the demonic doll Chucky, whom the unfortunate toddler resembled.

Getty

*A gyrating shadow lantern from 1875.*

The sober chess-playing Turk represented the Uncanny for grown-ups, but an endless series of B-movies about evil puppets, largely pitched at children and teens, reveals how the Uncanny remains part of our collective unconscious. And how different, finally, are Kurzweil's nanobots from Chucky? The controversies created by La Mettrie's *Man, A Machine* demonstrate the extent to which eighteenth-century automata raised questions about our relations with God. But the myth of Descartes's clockwork puppet daughter reveals that uncanny automata also raised questions about our relations with the Devil.

Somehow, people who discuss "Strong A.I."—together with the cyborging of human beings and the nanobotic downloading of human consciousness—imagine the alternatives are either a glorious future or a simple failure. There remains, however, another possibility: initial success at the dream of mechanical life, which then becomes a nightmare. Freud was right. There is something genuinely uncanny about puppets, automata, and ventriloquists' dummies—and that uncanniness remains in androids, robots, nanobots, and cyborgs. The Devil always finds a way to nix our dreams of perfect life. ♦



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A 1934 orphans' concert in Essex, England. Hulton-Deutsch collection / CORBIS.

# Dreck the Halls

*A tour through the worst of Christmas music.*

BY MICHAEL LONG

There is only one good reason to hate Christmas music: treacle—the cloying sentimentality, molasses emotionalism, and gooey, faux-compassion. Easter songs are silly: Peter Cottontail comes hoppin' down the bunny trail, and ladies don Easter bonnets. The New Year's song "Auld Lang Syne" has license to be sickly sweet and dumb, as it is intended to be sung drunk. And Thanksgiving and Halloween don't have any songs, unless you count those Stepford-style tunes your kids drag home from public school, celebrating diversity or mourning the mistreatment of some unsympathetic someone or other.

No, Christmas has the holiday treacle business locked up, and the most absurd and offensive Christmas song is—well, the mind reels at the possibilities. Any nominee for worst carol has to combine chestnut cliché with the tiredest of tired sentiment and pedestrian melody, with extra points given for rock-operatic arrangement, religious dissonance, misplaced gravity, and the emotional exploitation of sad children.

*Michael Long is a director of the White House Writers Group.*

So, for instance, songwriter Steve Earle wins a mention, in the category of "Best Performance By An Artist in Decline," for "Christmas in Washington." Once a savvy observer of rural surroundings, Earle now attempts to evoke holiday smiles with a paean to violent radicals: The anarchist Emma Goldman, the Wobbly Joe Hill, and Malcolm X are all present in this Christmas song, tied somehow or other to Martin Luther King (who surely doesn't deserve the company).

Then, too, we have "Do They Know It's Christmas? (Feed The World)" by Band-Aid, a motley collection of but-they're-big-in-Europe pop singers who recorded the song in 1984 to raise money to relieve hunger in Africa. While it was a noble sentiment, the music that Band-Aid squeezed out is indictable not only for being bad, but also because it inspired a mob of B-grade U.S. stars to foist "We Are the World" on America not long after. Band-Aid's output was off-key Europop that sounds like the product of a committee, which it was, set to a wandering beat that suggests a shaggy dog loping in fits and starts across a lawn doubling as a gopher farm. The song's lyric *Do they know it's Christmastime at all?* ostensibly refers to famine victims in Ethiopia—a place where, if you did know it was Christmastime, you might be wise to keep it to yourself, as at least one recent news report on the condition of evangelicals there included the phrase "was hit in the face with a stone."

It is, of course, possible to be offensive with no lyrics at all. An outfit of apparently interchangeable membership called Trans-Siberian Orchestra came through with "Christmas Eve / Sarajevo 12/24," a smashmouth medley of otherwise pretty carols. With its overwrought electric guitars, orchestral whining, and low-register piano-pounding, the emphasis is more on Sarajevo circa 1993 than Christmas Eve. The song sounds like Meatloaf and Andrew Lloyd Webber first spent a month getting crazy-high on Vicodin and then, freed by addiction from the constraints of taste, proceeded to write musical accompaniment for a nuclear holocaust.

Radio listeners inside the Beltway this year are racing for the off-switch when Maura Sullivan's "Christmas Eve in Washington" comes warbling over the air. A vehicle for charity fundraising, suggesting that music with sledgehammer emotion is at least as valuable as direct mail, "Christmas Eve in Washington" is a blizzard of cliché freezing into iceballs, such as the terrifying idea of "snowmen peeking through the windows" and sounds-good-until-you-think phrases like "peace can stand her ground." If music were judged by how many shoes it provides for orphans, the song would be an unqualified success—but it's not.

For a more direct study of orphans' (or at least orphans-to-be) securing shoes, one need listen only to NewSong's instant holiday classic "The Christmas Shoes," in which the narrator encounters a lad "dirty from head to toe" with a sack of pennies in one hand and a pair of ladies' Hush Puppies in the other: *You see, mom's been sick for quite awhile / And I know these shoes would make her smile / And I want her to look beautiful / If mama meets Jesus tonight.*

But Jesus has never been cast in such an embarrassing musical role as



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He was in the most wrong Christmas record ever, 1977's "The Little Drummer Boy," recorded by Bing Crosby and David Bowie. Crosby, the dignified father of pop-music singing, a profoundly innovative jazz vocalist, and one of the masters of pop culture in the first half of the twentieth century, was paired with Bowie, a rock performer best known for cross-dressing and hanging out with Andy Warhol.

Whoever tricked ol' Bing into that duet did more than create a bad Christmas record. He also managed to erase from the public mind one of the most influential careers in both music and pop culture, replacing it with the memory of three horrifying moments from a TV special. Bowie's scratchy, wooden tenor wanders through Crosby's peerless bass-baritone like a straight-pin floating around in a bottle of wine, just waiting to catch in someone's throat.

To trainwreck Bing Crosby's reputation while coronating his opposite, a master of style over substance—and using a Christmas carol to do it—well, that's as offensive a holiday happening as there could be. The record captures in a few moments some of the saddest offenses against Christmas, culture, and quality in general. Some holiday songs are bad, but only this one is profoundly so. It's what they play in Hell, and Satan keeps it playing all year long. ♦

# Merry Murder

*Crime fiction for Christmas.*

**BY JON L. BREEN**

The tradition of telling ghost stories at Christmas has a venerable lineage, reaching back well into the Middle Ages. Christmas detective stories have a shorter history. Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle" (1892) is an early example, but Yuletide mysteries remained relatively rare—until, in recent years, their commercial possibilities began to be exploited with a stack of new books every year. Though Doyle gave Sherlock Holmes only one holiday case, recent writers of Holmes parodies, imitations, and pastiches have filled two volumes with them: *Holmes for the Holidays* (1996) and *More Holmes for the Holidays* (1999).

**A Crossworder's Holiday**
by Nero Blanc
Prime Crime, 224 pp., $22.95

**A Puzzle in a Pear Tree**
by Parnell Hall
Bantam, 308 pp., $23.95

**The Christmas Garden Affair**
by Ann Ripley
Kensington, 293 pp., $22

*A frequent contributor of essays on mystery fiction to* THE WEEKLY STANDARD, *Jon L. Breen is the winner of two Edgar awards.*

Over the years, some long-running sleuths have followed Holmes in investigating Yuletide crime, including Nero Wolfe in Rex Stout's "Christmas Party" (1957) and Simenon's great police detective in "Maigret's Christmas" (1954). Several of the prominent British sleuths solve cases involving traditional Christmas pantomimes: Ngaio Marsh's Roderic Alleyn in *Tied Up in Tinsel* (1972), G.K. Chesterton's Father Brown in "The Flying Stars" (1911), and John Mortimer's Rumpole of the Bailey in "Rumpole and the Old Familiar Faces" (in this year's *Rumpole Rests His Case*). The best of James Yaffe's intricately plotted novels about a Jewish mother detective, *Mom Meets Her Maker* (1990), provides a non-Christian's view of the holiday.

Approaches vary with the authors' styles. Christmas mysteries in the classical tradition often take the favored sleuth to a deceptively cozy holiday house party, preferably snowed in, at which the family and friends gathered only pretend to be jolly—and sometimes they don't even pretend. By contrast, hardboiled private eyes and jaded big city cops live in a world of emaciated Santas, barroom wreaths, and other symbols of the grim loneliness of a mean-street Noel.

The mystery writer who has turned most often to Christmas for inspiration is Ed McBain, whose 87th Precinct cops pull holiday duty in *The Pusher* (1956), *Sadie When She Died* (1972), and *Money, Money, Money* (2001). *Ghost* (1980) uses the Christmas season to provide the only supernatural moment in McBain's long-running series. With the separately published short story *And All Through the House: Christmas Eve at the 87th Precinct* (1984), a station-house Nativity metaphor with an ironic final line to cut the sentimentality, McBain produced a Christmas novella—a cash-cow formula that has well served such bestselling crime writers as Mary Higgins Clark (several times), John Grisham, William Bernhardt, and Janet Evanovich.

Cozy writers are more likely than their noirish brethren to produce Yuletide mysteries, as shown in three examples from the 2002 crop. Two of these are from the highly specialized subgenre of crossword-puzzle mysteries, which dates back to Dorothy L. Sayers's Lord Peter Wimsey short story "The Fascinating Problem of Uncle Meleager's Will" (collected in *Lord Peter Views the Body*, 1928). To make a crossword the key to the solution is a formidable challenge even in the context of formalist artifice. The husband-and-wife team (Cordelia Frances Biddle and Steve Zettler) who write as Nero Blanc manage it in *A Crossworder's Holiday*, gathering five agreeably written and trickily plotted short stories about their sleuthing team of puzzle designer Belle Graham and her private eye husband Rosco Polycrates. The last and best is "A Ghost of Christmas Past," about a Cotswolds house with a history of vanishings.

The running joke of Parnell Hall's "Puzzle Lady" mysteries, continuing



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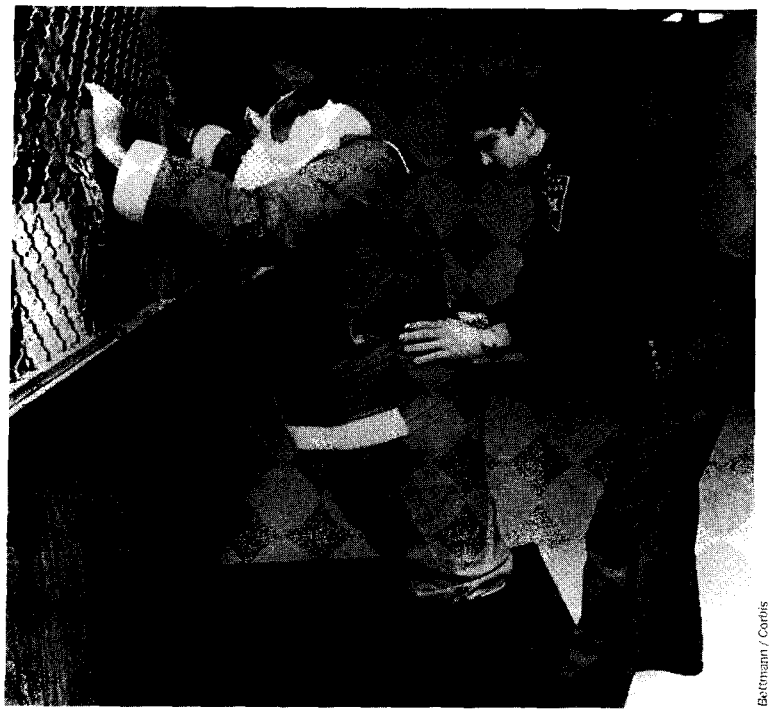

Bettmann / Corbis

with *A Puzzle in a Pear Tree*, is that amateur sleuth Cora Felton is neither the master puzzle-setter nor the sweet little old lady her public image suggests. During rehearsal for a village Christmas pageant, in which Cora reluctantly plays one of the seven maids-a-milking, a threatening acrostic (to be followed by several more) is substituted for the partridge in a pear tree. Refreshingly in the current market, Hall is a pure entertainer, with no great themes or underlying seriousness. There is some sly social satire, as when the local PTA doesn't want actors in the village's "living manger" scene to change clothes in a local church—because they don't want the Nativity associated with organized religion. Hall has fun with hoary genre conventions, including the curare-tipped blowgun dart, the near-miss falling sandbag during a stage rehearsal, and the witness who fears talking to the amateur sleuth will mark him for murder as the Man Who Knew Too Much. As one of the few active practitioners of the elaborate Golden Age-style detective novel, Hall should be cherished.

Ann Ripley's *The Christmas Garden Affair* is a more typical contemporary cozy in its emphasis on specialized background and disdain for fair-play clues. Louise Eldridge, PBS garden show host and heroine of several earlier Ripley novels, attends the new first lady's garden party, designed to celebrate native American plants.

Murder follows among a variety of horticultural hangers-on, many with reason to loathe rival television host Bunny Bainfield, whose breasts are more notable than her knowledge of botany. All the elements of a classical detective story are here: a despicable murder victim, a large cast of potential suspects, an unusual weapon, even a half-baked locked-room problem. But the reader has no shot at solving it, the amateur sleuth's relation with the police is absurd, and the climax is one of the sillier into-the-killer's-clutches sequences in the mystery genre. The holiday content is also slight until the feel-good final chapter at the Eldridge family feast.

For the best of the Christmas mysteries, turn to the classics. Agatha Christie's *Hercule Poirot's Christmas* (1938; U.S. title *Murder for Christmas*), in which a dying patriarch uses his Christmas gathering to announce his gleeful plans to change his will, is widely admired as one of her finest puzzles. Be warned, though, that there is not nearly as much holiday trimming in the novel as may appear from the picturesque television adaptation with David Suchet as Poirot.

Ellery Queen's *The Finishing Stroke* (1958) was originally intended by the authors (Frederic Dannay and Manfred B. Lee) to be the last bow of detective Queen. They set the first chapter in 1905, the year of birth of Ellery and his creators; the main body in 1929, the year the first Queen novel was published; and the final section in 1957, when Ellery at last solves the case that had stumped him all those years before: a Christmas house party of theatrical, artistic, and publishing people disrupted by murder and the appearance of mysterious verses based on "The Twelve Days of Christmas."

The nostalgia mystery of *The Finishing Stroke*, rich in period allusions, is commonplace now, but it was unusual when the book appeared. As with all Queen problems, the reader is given enough clues to work out the incredibly elaborate solution, provided (as Manfred Lee once observed) the reader is a genius.

Cyril Hare, pseudonym of the English barrister and judge Alfred Alexander Gordon Clark (1900-1958), was less famous and prolific than Ellery Queen or Agatha Christie, but in *An English Murder* (1951), he produced one of the finest snowbound Christmas mysteries, notable both for its puzzle and its portrait of Britain's changing politics and social classes at mid-twentieth century.

The hideously ill-assorted "family" house party, containing enough social, political, and personal conflicts for a much larger group, consists of a dying peer, his neo-Nazi son, the Labour chancellor of the exchequer, the wife of a whiz kid who wants the latter's job, a Jewish history scholar from Eastern Europe, and a titled ingénue once romantically involved with the son. Also present are a Scotland Yard man guarding the chancellor and one of detective fiction's most fully realized butlers since Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* appeared in 1868. Hare keeps the reader guessing about everything: Who will die, who will kill, and who will detect. The solution is ingenious, surprising, and perfectly fair if you follow the historical clues. There's not much Christmasy, apart from the snow, the cold, and the foreign scholar's name ("Dr. Wenceslaus Bottwink"), but the novel is an under-appreciated classic of detective fiction.

Gather up all of these, and you'll have plenty of good mysteries to see you through the twelve days of Christmas. ♦



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*"I'm glad to see that dinner theater isn't completely dead."*

## Books in Brief

***Worth the Fighting For: A Memoir* by John McCain, with Mark Salter (Random House, 396 pp., $25.95).** As a recovering McCainiac, I hesitated to pick up the new John McCain-Mark Salter volume. Their previous effort, McCain's war memoir, *Faith of My Fathers*, was so good that I expected *Worth the Fighting For* to be a disappointment.

It's not. It's true that this book isn't as compelling as *Faith of My Fathers*. But it's a gripping story, well told, and one that serves as an accessible and lively introduction to the last quarter century of American politics (obviously from a particular vantage point). It strikes me as a perfect holiday gift for politically interested college students and young people.

As a 1972 Scoop Jackson-for-president volunteer when I was in college (I was nothing less than vice president of Harvard-Radcliffe Students for Scoop, which had all of ten members, and of which Alan Keyes was president), I particularly enjoyed McCain's discussion of Jackson. McCain got to know Jackson well when McCain served as a Navy liaison officer to the Senate in the late 1970s. According to McCain, Jackson "was and remains for me the model of what an American statesman should be." McCain pays moving tribute to Jackson's courage and his decency, to his "hardheaded idealism," and to his "magnificent" efforts on behalf of the "good cause" of American strength in the service of liberty.

There's much more that's interesting and worthwhile in this book. Perhaps I'm not a *recovering* McCainiac, after all.

—*William Kristol*

***Leo Strauss, Max Weber and the Scientific Study of Politics* by Nasser Behnegar (University of Chicago Press, 216 pp., $30).** Nasser Behnegar has produced, with *Leo Strauss, Max Weber and the Scientific Study of Politics*, a Socratic introduction to the political science of Strauss. By examining Strauss's critiques of Weber's distinction between "facts and values" and the relativistic political science to which Weber helped give rise, Behnegar shows how Strauss provided intellectual resources to get beyond contemporary opinions—the ones that obstruct our recovery of a political science that understands its primary task to be the right guidance of political life. In so doing, Behnegar shows Strauss to be a friend, albeit not an uncritical one, of liberal democracy.

Unlike most who have written on Strauss, friend and enemy alike, Behnegar is not a partisan. He is less interested in whose "side" Strauss was on or where Strauss ultimately came down on "issues" than in what Strauss thought and how he thought about it.

Particularly helpful in this regard is Behnegar's illuminating treatment of an endlessly discussed and typically misunderstood passage. In it, Strauss shows that Weber was led to formulate the fact-value distinction because he believed that the seemingly irresolvable conflict between divine revelation and human reason made impossible "a thoroughly sincere life"—and thus there was reason for despair. Given that Strauss thought that sincerity was at best a quality of dubious worth, scholars should henceforth refrain from their practice of ascribing the view Strauss discerned in Weber to Strauss himself.

Behnegar recognizes that as a philosopher Strauss is above all intent upon grasping, rather than preaching solutions to, the permanent problems: "Only by understanding this attitude, which determined Strauss's entire being, can we understand why a friend of philosophy would state the objections to it with such clarity that many have wondered whether he affirmed philosophy," *Leo Strauss, Max Weber and the Scientific Study of Politics* declares.

In no small part as a result of his acute grasp of Strauss's being a philosopher, Behnegar has the honor of having authored the single best book on Strauss.

—*Steve Lenzner*



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# Bush Moves to Trim Size of Government

*By* THOMAS B. EDSALL
*Washington Post Staff Writer*

The era of Hefty Chic is over. Following the resignations of John DiIulio, Harvey Pitt, and Lawrence Lindsey, Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham, the final member of the Axis of Cholesterol, is under intense pressure to step down from the Bush administration. "He's being undermined by the Bulimics," says a White House staffer, referring to the cabal of ultra-thin, ultra-fit aides surrounding the president.

"I heard Josh Bolten and Condi Rice talking about Spence over lunch," this aide reports. "I think they were having carrot juice and splitting a packet of Nutrasweet. That was their lunch! Then they both hit the gym to work it off."

Others believe the purge of the portly begins at the top. "I want an administration that looks like Ethiopia!" the president has reportedly told his staff, referring to the once famine-torn nation. "I want to see ribs." President Bush, whose Secret Service code name is Stairmaster, reportedly keeps a chart of the collective White House fat-to-body-mass ratio in his desk.

"He's found his mission and his moment," one senior administration official declares. "Do you think it's an accident that John Snow and Stephen Friedman were forced to wear Spandex to their job interviews? This administration is going to be a lean, mean fighting machine."

AP PHOTO- -BY RON EDMONDS

The thin initiative has caused concern in GOP circles. "I call it the tyranny of the Mayberry Jack LaLanes," says John Engler, the Michigan governor who was passed over for a top White House post. Others believe the fitness craze is hurting U.S. foreign policy. "They really need to focus more on upper body work," says the State Department's Richard Armitage. "Running is for sissies."

Karl Rove was unavailable for comment.

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DECEMBER 23, 2002

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# The Cost of a Proficient Student

**Herbert J. Walberg is a distinguished visiting fellow, Hoover Institution; a member of Hoover's Koret Task Force on K–12 Education; and University Scholar and research professor emeritus of education and psychology at the University of Illinois at Chicago.**

Fourth grade marks the point that proficient students stop learning to read and start reading to learn. A federal achievement survey performed by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) estimates that in 1998 only 29 percent of fourth graders attained such proficiency. Lack of reading skills reduces students' chances of thriving academically and graduating from high school.

Failure cannot be blamed on low spending. State-level per-student expenditures ranged from $3,969 in Utah to $9,643 in New Jersey. Taxpayers could reasonably expect that such investments would produce academically proficient fourth graders, whom the NAEP defines as demonstrating "solid academic performance" and being well prepared for fifth-grade work.

**U.S. taxpayers spent an average of $107,000 to produce a proficient fourth-grade reader** in 1998, the latest year for which data are available. According to the U.S. Department of Education, the annual per-student cost of K–12 public education was $6,189 for the 1997– 98 school year. Thus, by fourth grade, the cumulative U.S. taxpayer investment in a child's public education is five years at roughly $6,189 a year, or $30,945.

Given that the expenditure of $30,945 per pupil produced only twenty-nine proficient readers out of every one hundred, the cost per proficient fourth-grade reader is $30,945 divided by 29 percent, or about $107,000. This calculation provides a cost index of how productively each state is using its tax dollars to produce proficient fourth-grade readers.

The three states with the highest costs per proficient fourth-grade reader are Hawaii ($172,000), with just 17 percent of Aloha State students reading at a proficient level; New York ($153,000), with 29 percent; and Delaware ($148,000), with 25 percent. New York and Delaware deliver only mediocre reading proficiency despite being among the top six states in the nation in per-pupil spending. **The highest cost by far was in the District of Columbia, where the cost of producing a proficient fourth-grade reader was $420,000—six times higher than in Utah.**

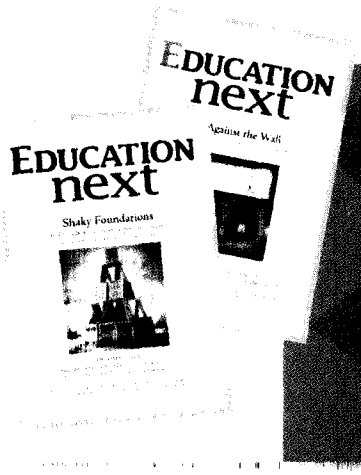
The three states with the lowest cost per fourth-grade reader are Utah ($70,900), with 28 percent of Beehive State students reading at proficient or above; Montana ($77,400), with 37 percent; and New Hampshire ($81,000), with 38 percent. Montana and New Hampshire achieve substantially higher than average proficiency rates at lower than average costs. Data from every state can be found at http://www-hoover.stanford.edu/pubaffairs/we/2002/walberg_1202table.html.

The new federal No Child Left Behind Act requires annual testing of all third through eighth graders. It will allow more timely comparisons not only of states but also of school districts and even schools. Other interesting calculations would be the costs of proficient algebraists by eighth grade and by high school graduation.

The cost per proficient student provides a usefully compact index to track the efficiency of schools because it combines effectiveness with cost, both of which are important to taxpayers who want to know the value of what their tax monies buy. Furthermore, they ought to be able to compare one school, school district, or state with another and to ask legislators and educators for an explanation of the comparative standings.

— *Herbert J. Walberg*

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

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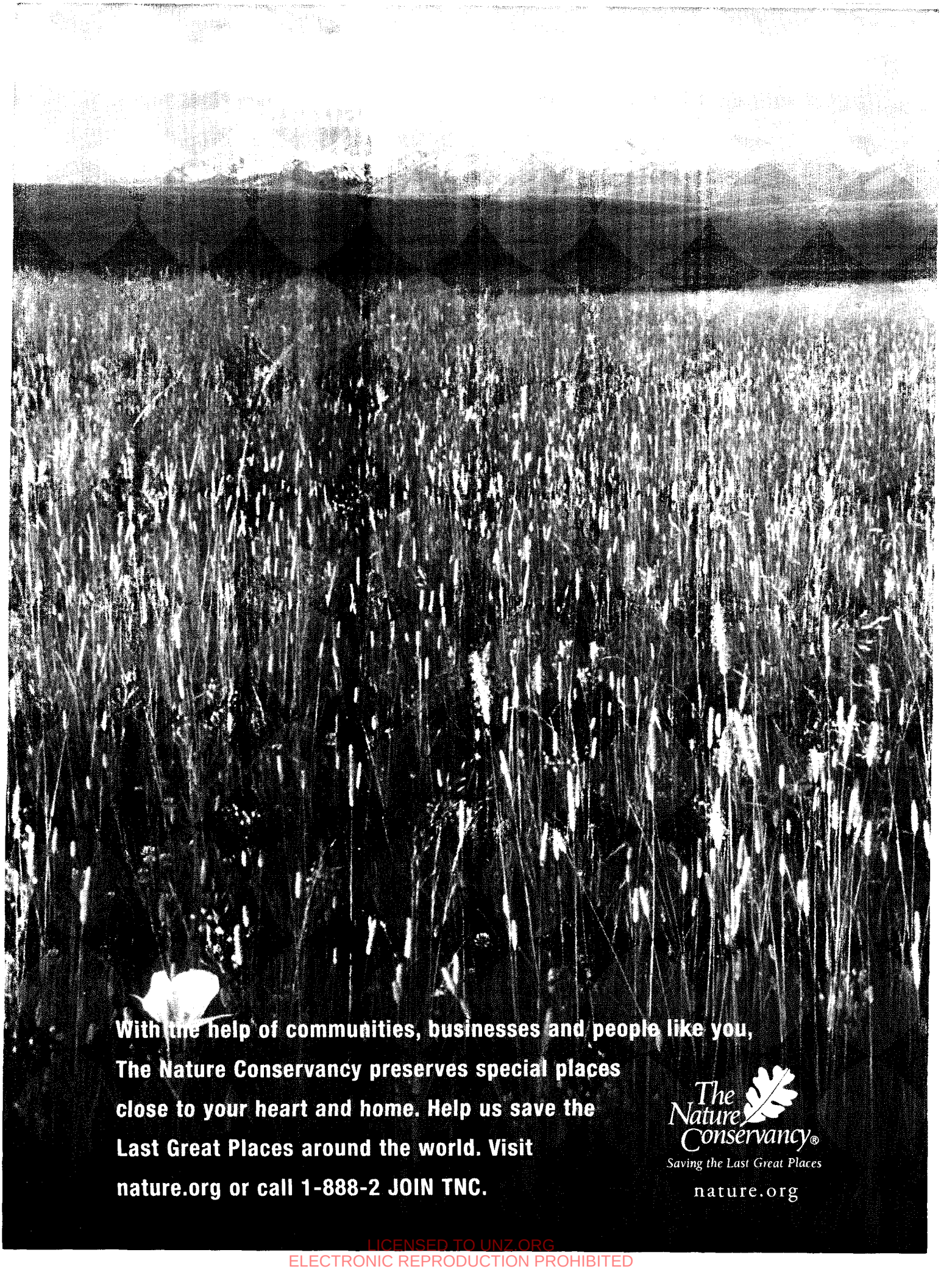


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